ピアノの森 19

一色まこと

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The Perfect World of KAI

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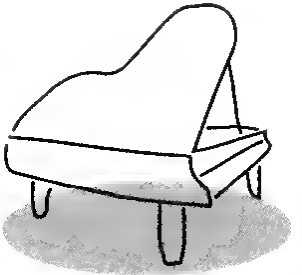
ピアノの森
一色まこと
ISSHIKI Makoto
The Perfect World of KAI
19



The Perfect World of KAI

19

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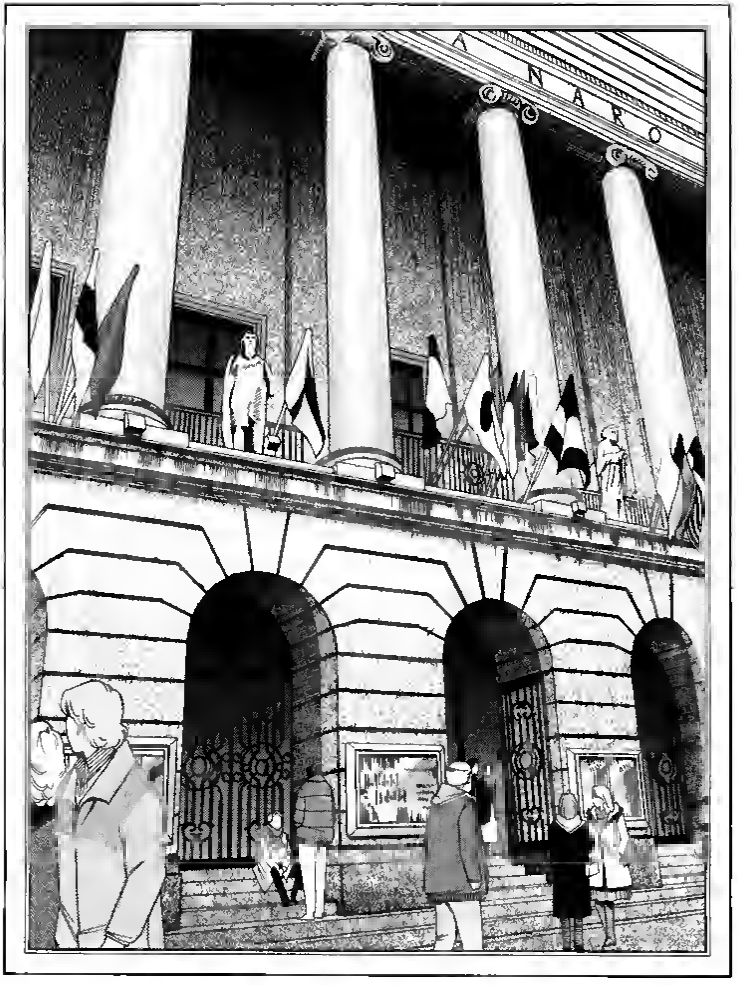


Chapter 167 The Birth of the Certain Champion

Lech Szymanowski's last piece, Sonata No.3...
Has once again brought "Poland's Chopin" perfectly to life...

The authentic "Chopin of Poland"...
This is... no matter how you put it...

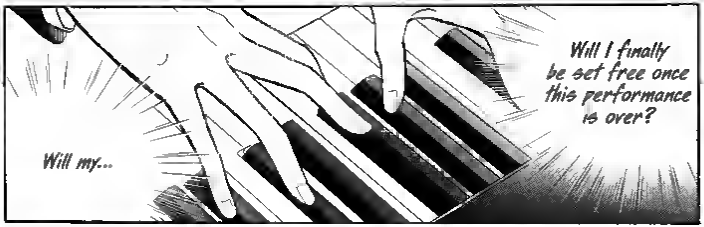
In that case... wouldn't that already make him the winner?!
That can only be revived by a Polish?!

Or rather... The whole of Poland... been waiting all these years...
Haven't all the people gathered here in this hall...

...For the appearance of this young man?!
STEINWAY & SONS

Ahh... Such uncontrived and beautiful playing...
To be able to listen to this played before our very ears...
So this is inborn musical talent...
Nobody can play better Chopin than this...
Honey... Lech is playing so wonderfully...

Amelia...
54
Amelia...

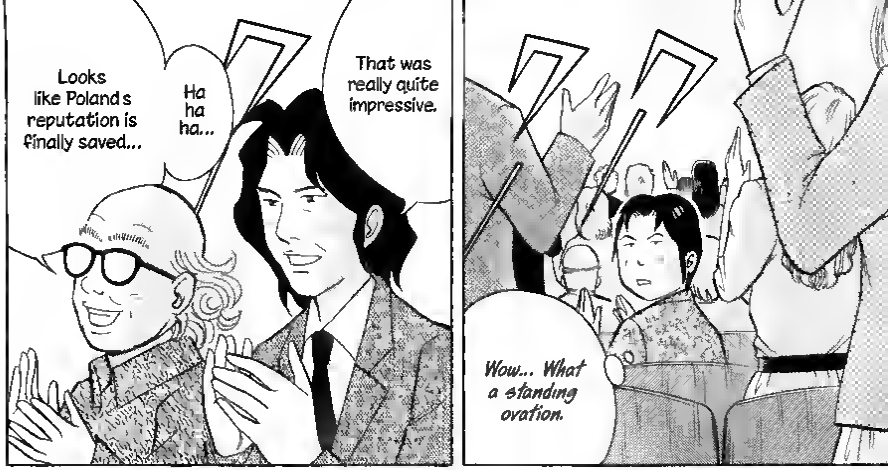

Will I finally be set free once this performance is over?
Will my...

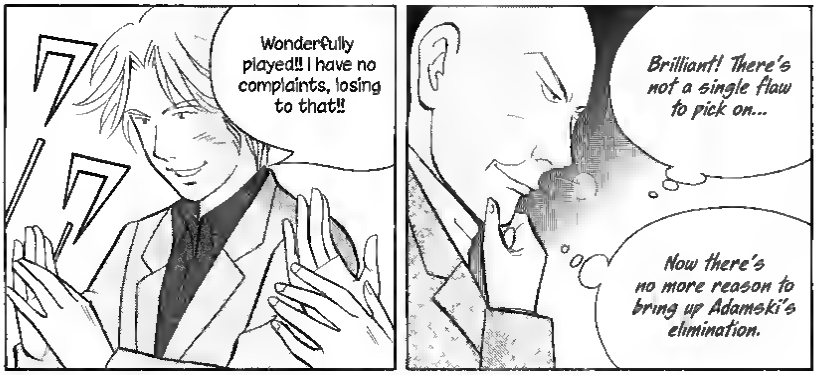
Will my sins be forgiven?

Yes, Lech.
So right now, just concentrate and give it all you've got!
I can do anything!!
If I really am forgiven, then...

At this moment...

Most of the audience...
And experts here in this hall, including me...
Are absolutely certain that Lech Szymanowski...
Will be the winner.


Looks like Poland's reputation is finally saved...
Ha ha ha...
That was really quite impressive.
Wow... What a standing ovation.


Wonderfully played!! I have no complaints, losing to that!!
Brilliant! There's not a single flaw to pick on...
Now there's no more reason to bring up Adamski's elimination.

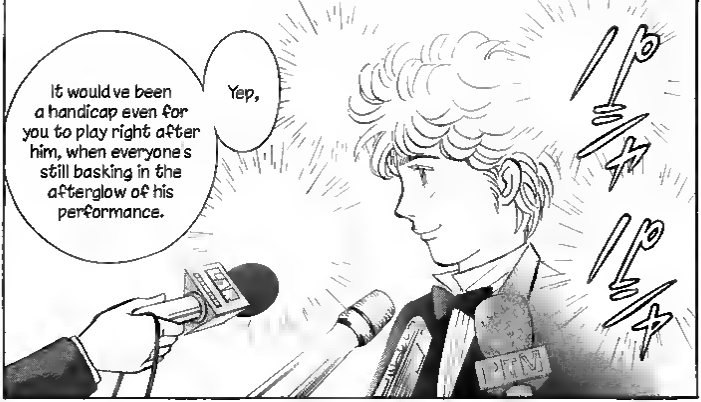
Such...
Such a performance...
Hats off to him! From the bottom of my heart!
Hahaha... Really?
Yeah!

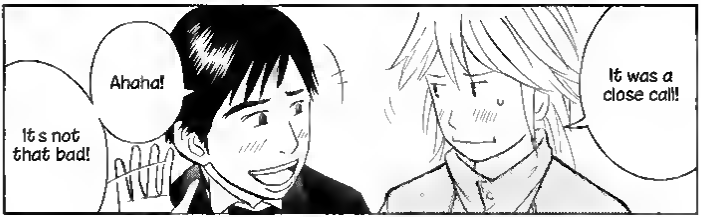
There's no way anyone could beat this!
Not just Shuuhei. It'll be a close call even for Wei Pang...
Yoichirou-san.
Yoichirou-san.
What's the matter with you, staring into space like that...
We've got a 30-minute break now.
Let's go for a coffee!

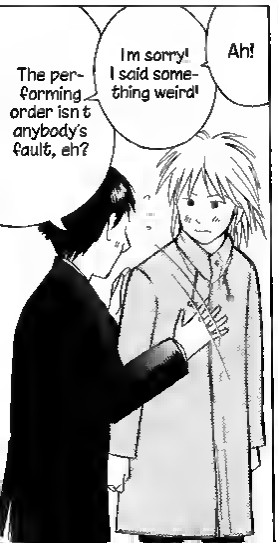
Szymanowski is amazing!!
Next up is Kai...
I almost cried!
This break may have done him good...
That was great, wasn't it...

Ichinose-kun, it's really lucky you have this 30-minute break...

Yeah.
What a relief.


It would've been a handicap even for you to play right after him, when everyone's still basking in the afterglow of his performance.
Yep,
パシャ
パシャ


It's not that bad!
Ahaha!
It was a close call!

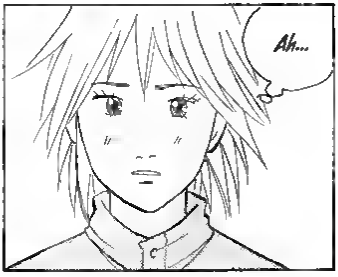

The performing order isn't anybody's fault, eh?
I'm sorry! I said something weird!
Ah!

I'm sure the cheers you receive will be as overwhelming as just now, not to mention the aftermath...

But I do wish I wasn't right after you, Ichinose-kun...
Sigh...

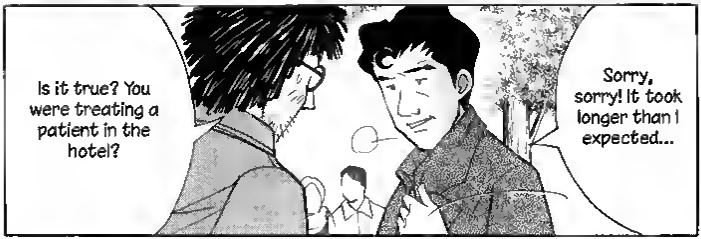
I won't be able to enjoy Ichinose-kun's performance in the auditorium!
It's just a shame that...
That's not it.
AAAAAA

I'm a fan of your music, you see!


Ah...

No, I really mean it!
Thank you, Mukai-san, for trying to cheer me up!

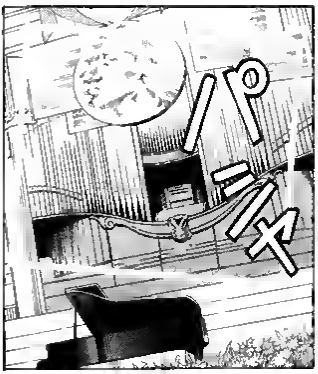
You're late so I was really worried!!
Heyyyyy, Nakao-sensei!!


Is it true? You were treating a patient in the hotel?
Sorry, sorry! It took longer than I expected...

This is what people think I'm here for. See, I came fully prepared!
A renowned musician came all the way from Germany and stayed in the same hotel with me just for my treatment.

Anyway, you sure the tickets are fine?
It's a real pain just to get one, so there's practically a riot!
Well, they are having a 30-minute break!
So we got here just in time, you know!
Oh, thank goodness!
Nashimoto-kun, who do you think I am?
Huh?
Nakao-sensei is one of the most renowned hand surgeons in the world...
Lately, you're even known as "Dr. Musician's Hand", and are sought after by musicians from all over the world.
You don't have to sing my praises... But you've got that right.
Humph

So he arranged the tickets for me this time!
I've treated the conductor's hand before... The conductor of Chopin Philharmonic.
Thank you so much! Seriously, thank you so much...
You overreact to everything, don't you...
パニャ


パニャ

パニャ

パニャ

パニャ
Hey...

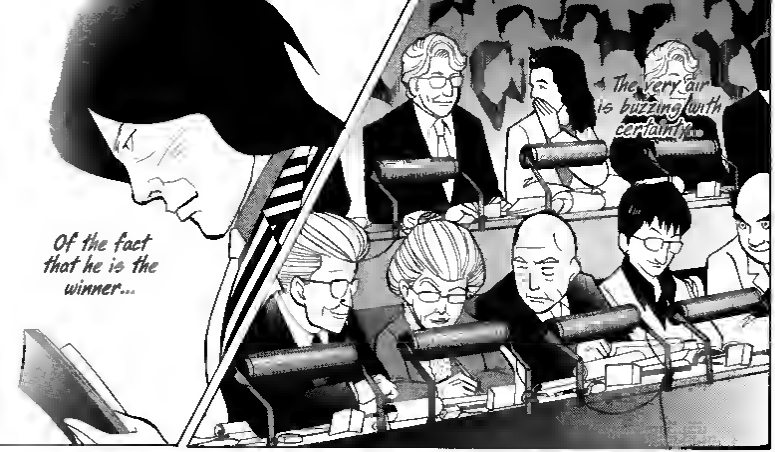
パニャ

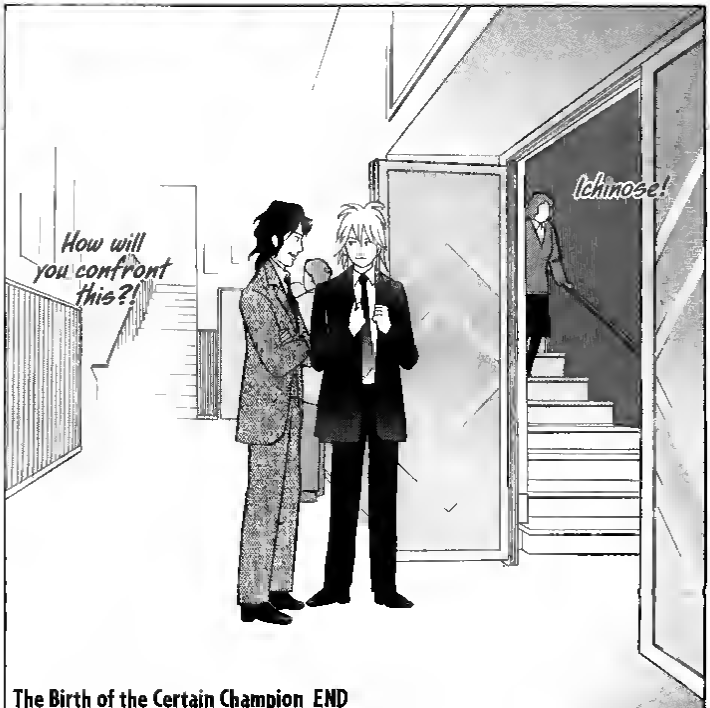
It's alright to be excited... But could you calm down a little?

37

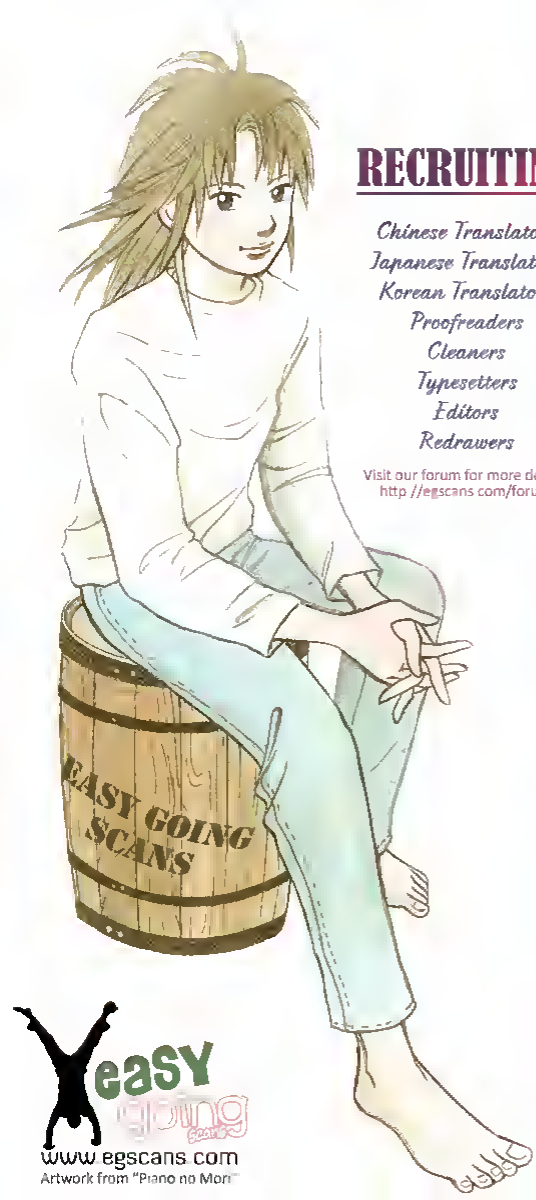
37

And now, we have the fourth performer of the day...
No 37, Kai Ichinose from Japan!
Kai...
Do your best, Kai!
It's finally his turn, sensei!
Szymanowski's influence still lingers in the hall...
Despite of the 30-minute intermission...
His set list is...
Ichinose...





The Birth of the Certain Champion END



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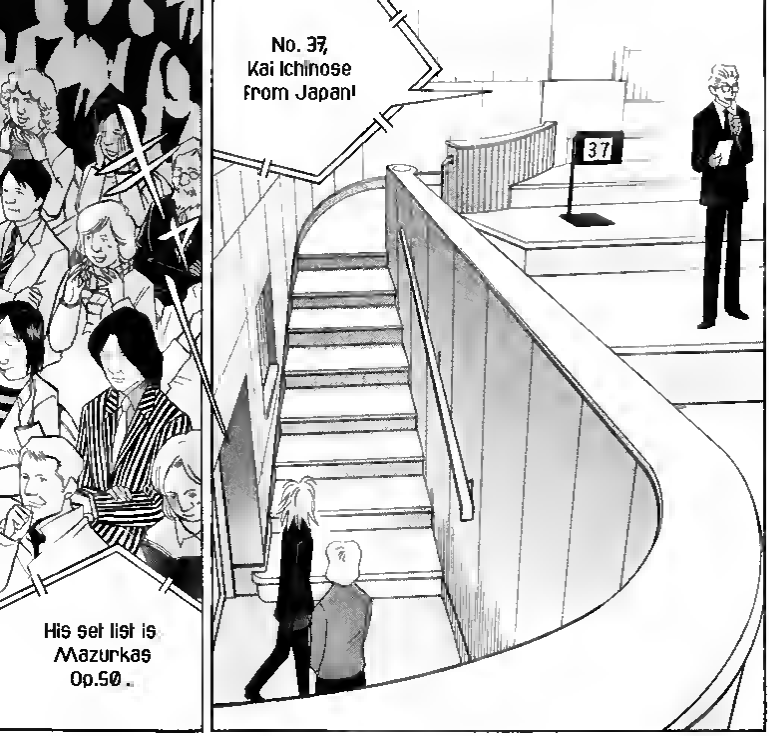
Artwork from "Piano no Mori"

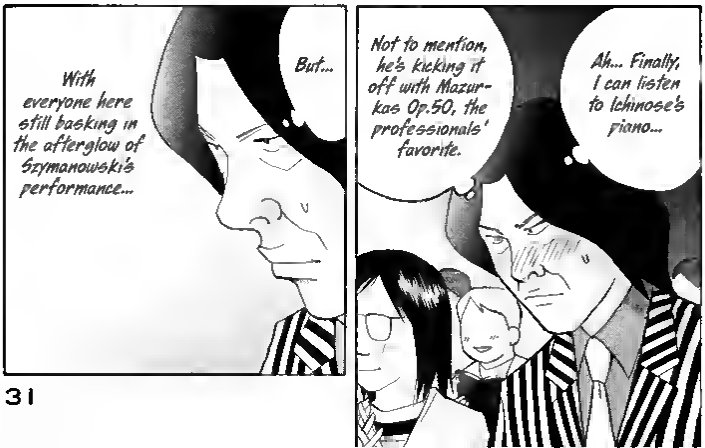
Chapter 168 Kai's Mazurkas

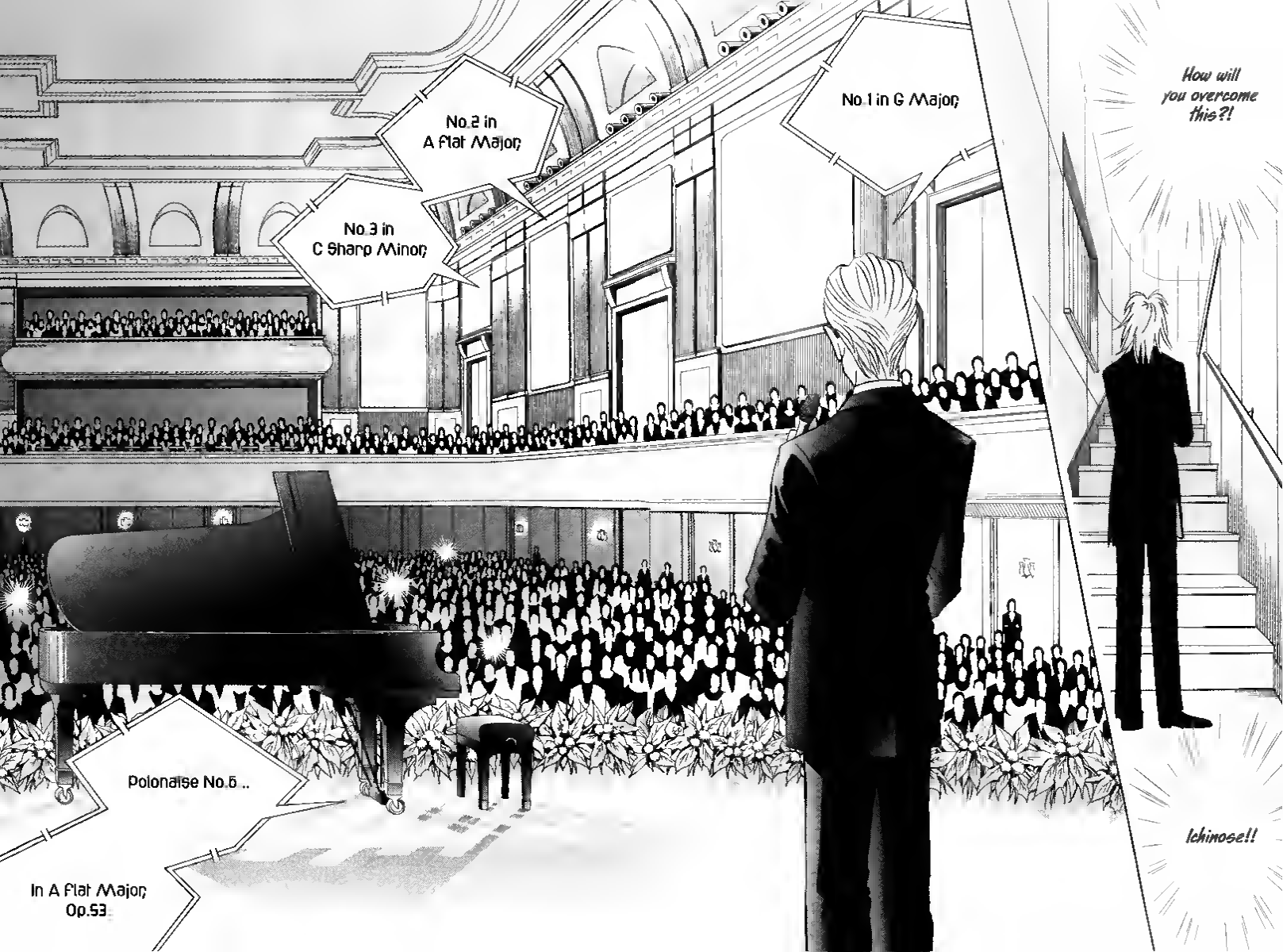
That Szymanowski guy was amazing! I can't believe he can play so well!
Agreed!
If he keeps playing like this, the championship will surely be his!
The other Polish contestants performed rather poorly...
I hate to say this but...
If Szymanowski's playing were a let-down, I would really have regretted eliminating Adamski.
Indeed.
I feel the same way!
What a relief.
How true!
Luckily, we can listen to the other contestants in peace now.

Well, there re only 2 contestants left now.
Next up is your favorite Japanese contestant, you know!
Oh, I see. This kid is going to be interesting.
tom
37
It hardly matters who's gonna play anymore...
Since no one in this Chopin Competition can possibly surpass "Poland's Chopin"!

Believe in yourself!
Kai.
Ah.
It's my turn!
Got it!
Well I'll have to go play now.
And now for the fourth performer of today...


No. 37,
Kai Ichinose
from Japan!
37
His set list is
Mazurkas
Op.50.


With everyone here still basking in the afterglow of Szymanowski's performance...
But...
Not to mention, he's kicking it off with Mazurkas Op.50, the professionals' favorite.
Ah... Finally, I can listen to Ichinose's piano...


No.2 in
A Flat Major
No.3 in
C Sharp Minor
No.1 in G Major
How will
you overcome
this?!
Polonaise No.6 ..
In A Flat Major
Op.53
Ichinose!!

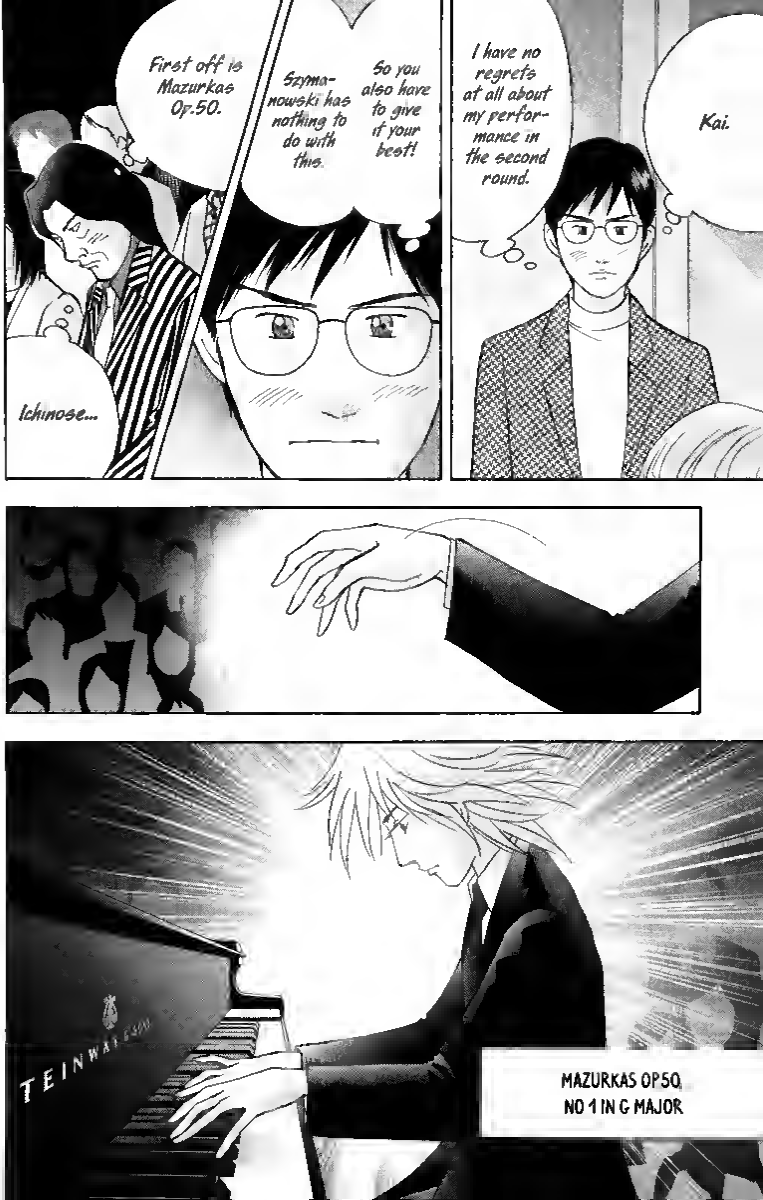
Ajino...
In B Minor, Op.58.
Sonata No 3 ..
His piano of choice is Steinway
Kai Ichinose...

Here he is!!
Here...
Japan!
37

What...

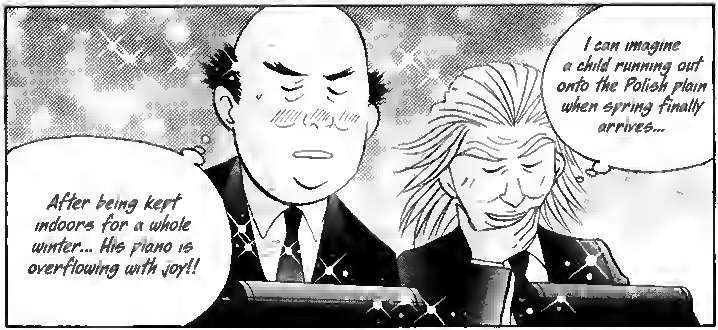
What's with the commotion?
Such popularity... This is quite surprising!
He has gained this much support from his performance in the first round..
Heheheh.
These...
These cheers show how much the audience looks forward to his performance.
If he can't give one that rivals Szymanowski's, he'll lose their approval.

This would be a real challenge...
Even for Ichinose...
Kai.
Good to see you again, Chopin!
Hey!


First off is Mazurkas Op.50.
Szyma-nowski has nothing to do with this.
So you also have to give it your best!
Ichinose...
I have no regrets at all about my perfor-mance in the second round.
Kai.
MAZURKAS OP50, NO 1 IN G MAJOR

!!!
!!?
With just the introduction, Ichinose's music...
What in the world was I worrying about...
This sound...
This is it...
Ahh...

Has changed the very color of the hall.


I can imagine a child running out onto the Polish plain when spring finally arrives...
After being kept indoors for a whole winter... His piano is overflowing with joy!!

Kai's Mazurkas END

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Artwork from "Bungou Stray Dogs"

Was transformed by Ichinose in an instant.
This hall, completely dyed in Szymanowski's colors...
MAZURKAS OP.50
NO.2 IN A FLAT MINOR

Beautiful...

Is it a good sense of rhythm? His cantabile? Or his sense of harmony?

So warm and nostalgic...
Why does Ichinose's music sound so natural?

Chapter 169

To the Forest!!!

How beautiful...
How gentle...

It is filled with the vigor of fields... forests... deer...
I could almost see people dancing in the fields during the middle part.

If I listen with my eyes closed... It's truly like a mazurka played by a Pole.
No... His scene depiction is even more splendid.
This guy...

Amazing.
To think such a Japanese player exists...
Haha.

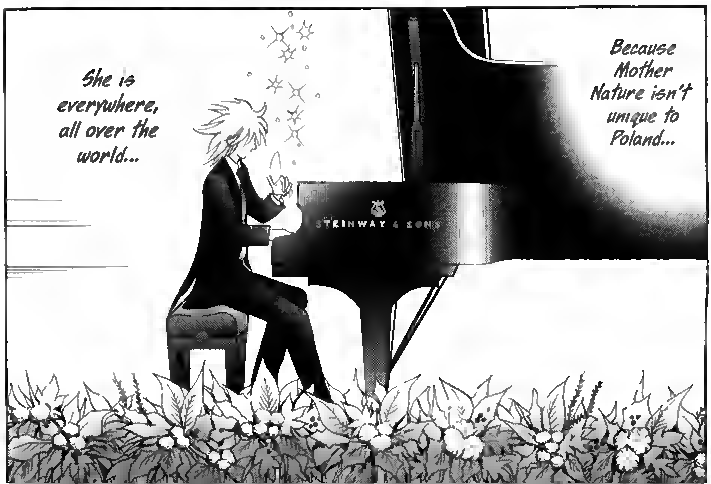
Even the Japanese who study in Poland out of admiration for Chopin... can't fully grasp it...
So how come Ichinose, who has never studied abroad, can play the mazurka so well?!!

What the hell... Everyone is so pleased...
Why is everyone partial to Ichinose?
Damn.

She used to play me this song as a lullaby, saying, "This is our Poland's Mother Nature."
Especially when this is the mazurka that my late mother loved so much...
Ah...
There's no way I'll give you a good score so easily!
Impossible!
Damn!
Damn!
Something must be wrong!
Ah...

T...To think a Japończyk made me cry!!
Kai...
...Has been particularly good at playing songs born of the earth since he was little.

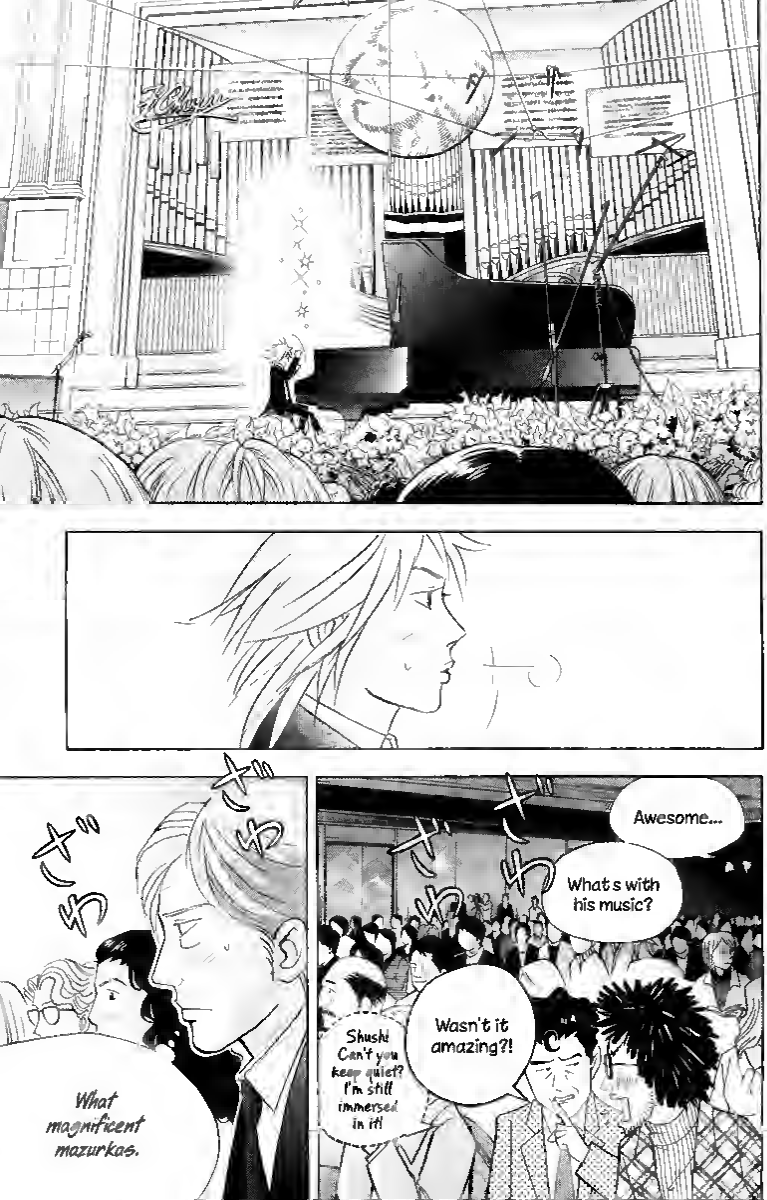
...Might have already become one with the Mazurka Spirit, which even I couldn't completely understand.
Kai, who was nurtured by the piano in the forest...


She is everywhere, all over the world...
Because Mother Nature isn't unique to Poland...
STEINWAY & SONS

It makes no difference to Ichinose whether it's Szymanowski or anyone else...
Regardless of whom he's playing after, he only plays his own piano.
I was way too naive.
Ah...
...Then and there.
He starts creating his own world...
NO.3 IN C SHARP MINOR
Why is this boy's playing so sorrowful... so heart-breaking?
....

And... his music is overflowing with love.

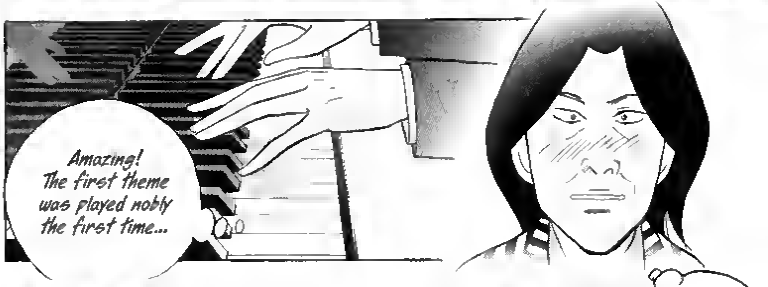
Was what drove Chopin to compose 60 mazurkas even when he was far away from Poland, his homeland, so that he would never forget where he came from...
Such profound sadness and love...
Why could Chopin's emotions be found on this young man...?

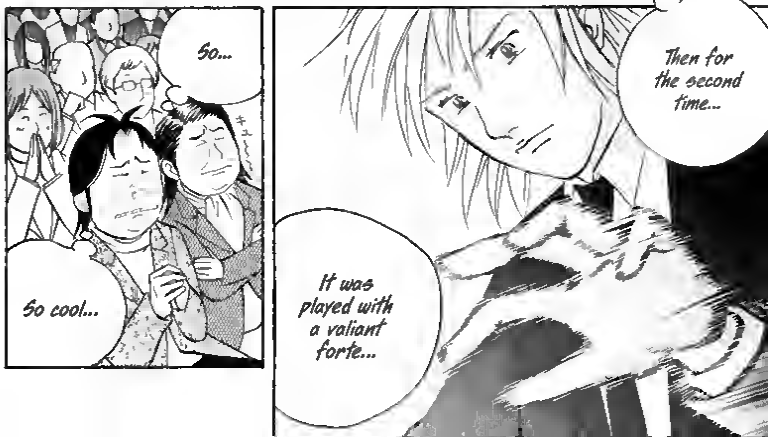

Awesome...
What's with his music?
Wasn't it amazing?!
Shushi Can't you keep quiet? I'm still immersed in it!
What magnificent mazurkas.

No.
One can't create true art without struggling.
While Ichinose seems to be born with his own.
Amamiya struggled to discover his own music...
So perhaps he has already experienced all sorts of struggles in life.
But now that he's grabbed hold of the audience's hearts with his mazurkas...
He won't be forgiven if he screws up even a little in the following polonaise.
I...I have to admit...His mazurkas were indeed excellent!

Here it comes...
Here it comes.
Here it comes.
It'll be a really powerful introduction...
This piece begins with a loud bang!!
!
H...He started it in a controlled manner.

What a firm introduction
Not only is it beautiful, it's also refined.
This makes people unexpectedly eager for him to show his hidden passion!


Amazing! The first theme was played nobly the first time...


So...
So cool...
Then for the second time...
It was played with a valiant forte...

Well, then!
How will you play the next part?
Hehehe... That's how you're playing it?!
The introduction and the presentation of the first theme... were mediocre.

To the forest...

Wow~ Amazing crescendo!!
!!!
Kai...
Neither my students nor I could master this kind of musical flow...
Yet he just executed it perfectly here in this hall?!!
TO THE FOREST!!!

TO THE FOREST!!!

(FORTISSISSIMO)
fff!!!
Kai... He played the theme, which can be found twice in the middle section, that makes people think of the march of the Polish knights...
But for the second time...
Instead of going back from f to p, he went directly from f to an even stronger...
...With an orthodox crescendo from p (piano) to f (forte) the first time...

SOOO COOOOOL!
Hey, hey...
Where does he get all that power from...
W...What an amazing middle section!!!
Now we're returning to the main theme...

*QC/N: ENDING

To the Forest!!! END

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Artwork from "Ayesha's Secret"

Chapter 170 The Promise of "Heading Out to the World"

Eh?
Sir, the performance is still going on!
Ah...!
Excuse me.
Ah... That was awkward ...
I wonder if I should have stood up and bowed?
I'm surprised... To think a child born and bred in Japan has such thorough understanding of the Polish spirit...
He really understands the Polish people's fortitude in enduring a history of suffering...!!!

So he has gained the instinctive approval of us Polish...
However, that Polish cavalry march surpasses even Szymanowski's noble interpretation.
The middle section of the polonaise might be a bit too ferocious...
And our applause.
I guess the Polish people are very honest towards music.
Hehe...
パチパチ
パチパチ

Compared to the Japanese contestants in the past, whose Chopins were always very demure...
Ichinose's piano playing bombards the audience with overwhelming messages.
Be it the mazurkas that completely changed the atmosphere in the auditorium...
Or the polonaise that captivated the heart of the audience... Just who is this kid?
But there's also a naturalness to it...
It's like the song of the earth reverbrating all around us.
How could such a young child possess the power to shake the very earth?!
ドン
ドン

SONATA NO 3 IN B MINOR, OP58
MOVEMENT I, ALLEGRO MAESTOSO
The firm structure is nicely sustained. The level of gallantry shows no sign of dropping.
Ah... Such a wonderful exposition.

This piece, Sonata in B Minor Movement I... Many people would drag out the scales in the introduction, resulting in a chaotic exposition.
But Ichinose is different!
Be it his perfect counterpoint in the build-up...
Or the rich accompani-ment...
It's undeniable that he has an exceptional ear for music! Not to mention... his extraordinary command over the keyboard... I can almost see the music score right before my eyes!!
Seriously... This is so dramatic!!

Hehe...
What we're seeing is Sousuke's structuring skills and Kai's natural talent as a pianist.
Nice job, Sousuke!
How in the world...
Is it the result of good mentorship... or is it simply the gift he was born with...?!
This...
This is the best Movement I.
Years ago, when I first taught him this piece...

I had to direct all his erratic bursts of raw energy inward...
His performance was full of mistakes...
So that he could express music with more focused energy.
Bit by bit... And save them up...
And playing all sorts of games with him.
I remember... trial and error... experiments...

I'm not an elementary school kid anymore!
Lighting a fire on the paper with this? Easy!
This brings me back!
Maybe the light is too dim in here?
Huh?
Huh?
Just focus on one point...
And stay still with all your might.
Then something will definitely...
Ah...
Happen...

We're not gonna play the piano today... Try writing out a music score using this method.
WHAT?
What's this about? Some philosophical stuff?
Haha
Well... I was just borrowing someone else's idea.
Umm
ボウ
WHOA!
CHOPIN
However, try not to start a fire!
CHOPIN
Today, even if you see a fish, you're not allowed to chase after it!
Don't go too far!
Rustle

I wonder what this is about?
He said... not to let out any energy and keep it all within myself...
Got it! Today is for image training!
Not even baby sea tacos?
Not even baby sea turtles.
You have to feel the energy yourself.
I can't teach you how to do that.
Oh!
My body heats up whenever I get to this central part.
Mh...
Gain control over it!
Feel it...

Ah...
This part...
MOVEMENT II
"SCHERZO", MOLTO VIVACE

To... To think his playing could be this intricate...
His grasp on counterpoint is perfect...
Such a splendid Scherzo...
What amazing touch!
Even though the middle section is played in such a relaxed manner, it doesn't feel sluggish.
This sounds just like how I played it in my younger days. A truly great performance.
Hehehe... He's playing my version, huh?
Whoa...
He just dived straight into the third movement !!!
MOVEMENT III, LARGO

Kai has played such a breathtaking main theme and middle section... And...
Ahh.. This middle passage is beautiful...
It's just like a pretty little brook in Poland...
It's so beautiful...
K...Kai,
You've always been the daring type.
Absolutely... mind-blowing...
His subsequent return to the main theme is mind-blowing...
No...
He's still playing.
Huh?
I can't hear anything...
Has he stopped playing?

I can hear it coming from far away.
Offstage?
No, it sounds like it's coming from outside...
From a beautiful forest in Warsaw...

A super super super pianissimo...
What... is this?
Is this a miracle?
Unbelievable
There's actually a pianist who can play like this...

This is entirely Kai's own interpretation. The piano that once belonged to me... The piano that I had abandoned...
This...

This is the sound of a miracle.
The Piano in the Forest can only be played by Kai, the one who revived it...

Ajino...
Right now, I...
I'm finally able to share my music with the world, aren't I?!

Wow
That time...
Wooooooow! The sea is always so big!
You told me, didn't you?
Kai...
Head out to the world!
Beyond the sea, there's an even bigger world out there.

Everything may be hard and infuriating right now...
But no matter what they say... Let it slide.
If you look back from out there, the Edge of the Forest is just a tiny place.
Spread your own wings and soar towards the world.
Because someday, you'll...
That's why...
Exactly!
"I already have everything I need"?

The world will definitely come to need you.
Do your best!
How can I ever... return this favor, Ajino?
If it turns out that way, nobody will be able to lift a finger against the two of you ever again...
Of course.
If it turns out that way, will Rei-chan also be able to head out to the world?

That's why I want you to promise me!
It will happen, Kai!
I said, "if it turns out that way"!
And it's hardly a favor.
Ahaha... Don't think about such things now...
Let the world hear the music that only Kai can play!
The Promise of "Heading Out to the World" END

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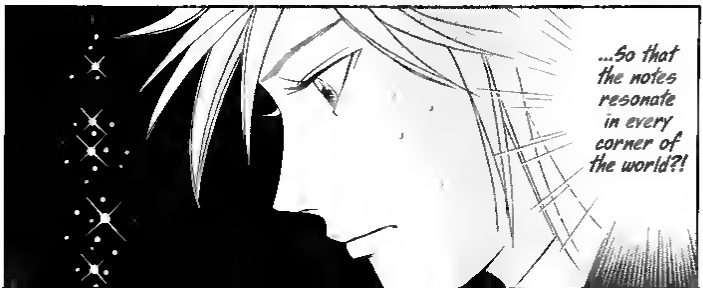
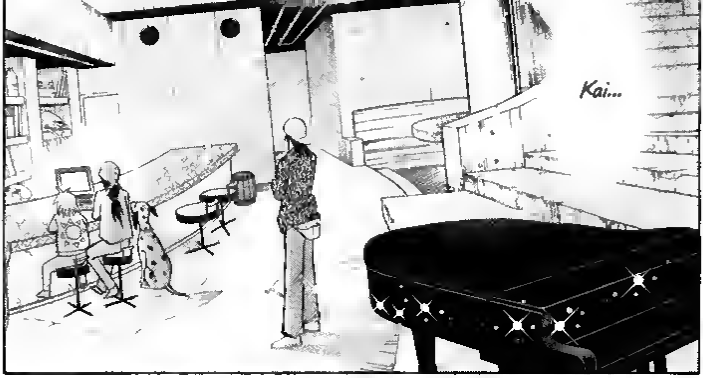
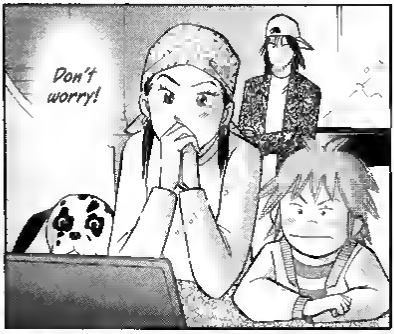
Chapter 171

Curtain Call

How far can these notes reach?
Will I be able to play it...

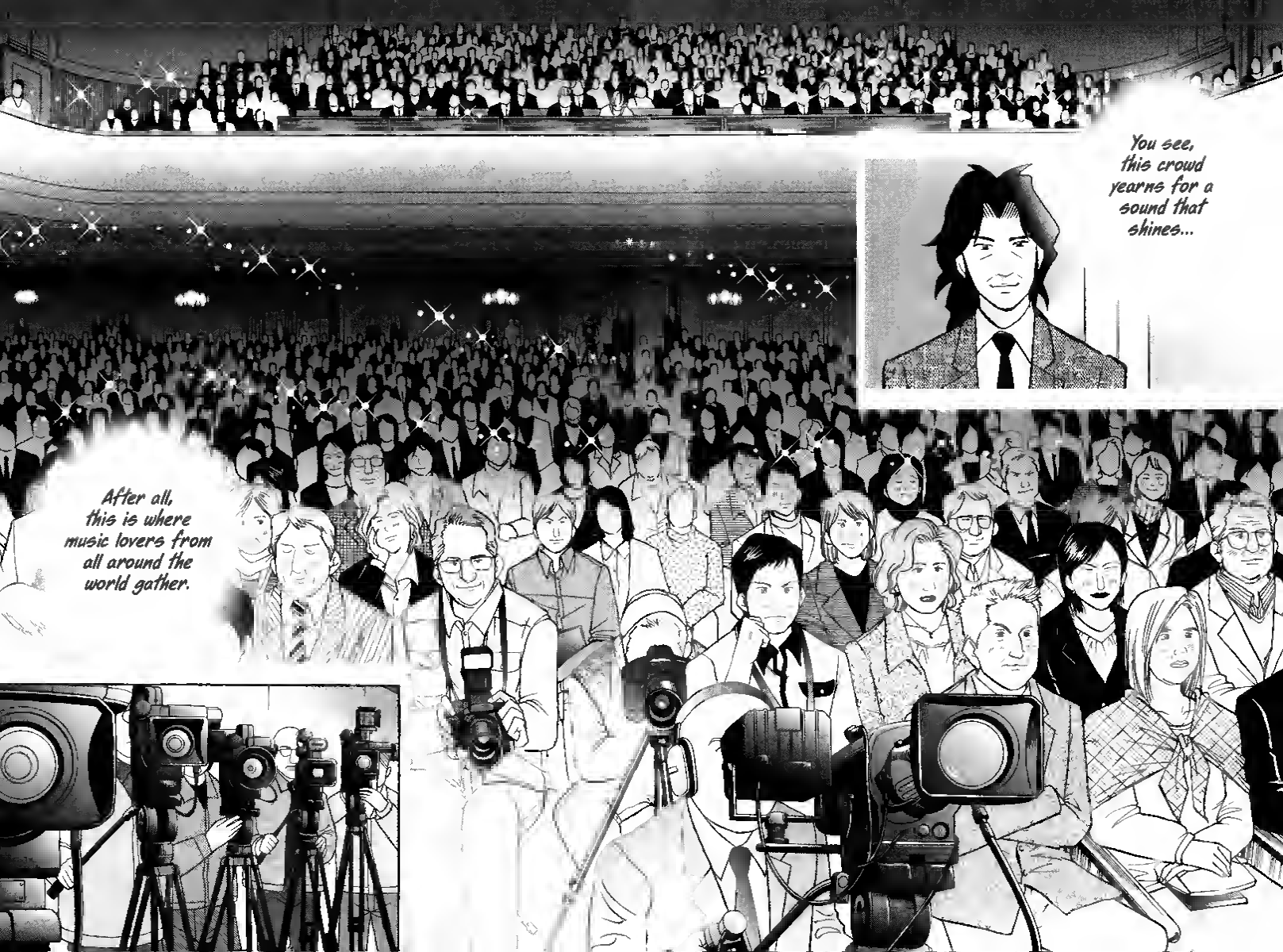

...So that the notes resonate in every corner of the world?!

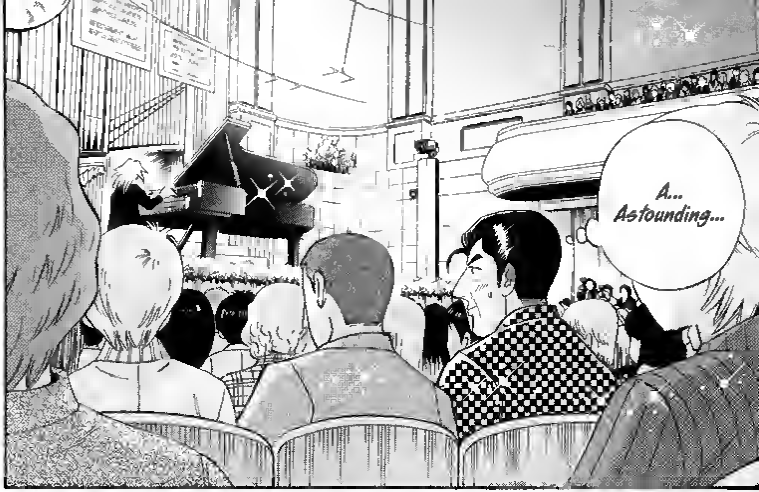

Kai...

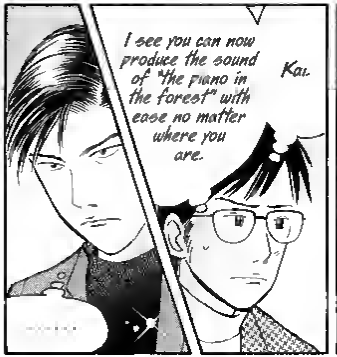

Don't worry!

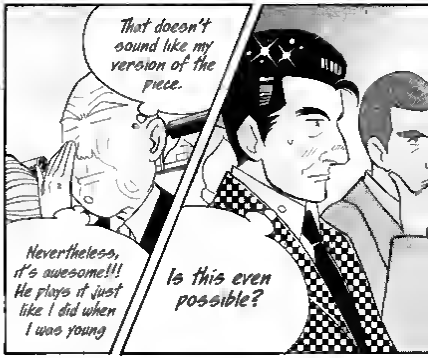
It will resonate in the hearts of those who listen.

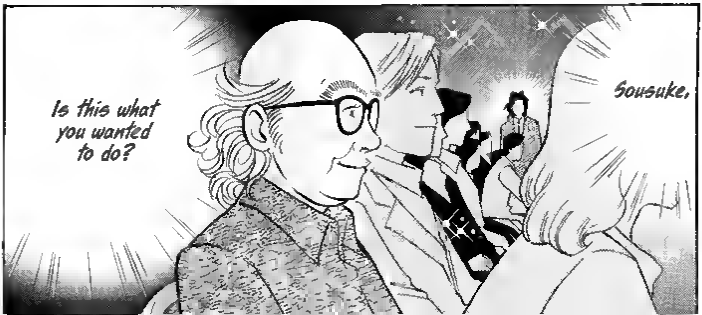
Surely,


You see, this crowd yearns for a sound that shines...
After all, this is where music lovers from all around the world gather.


A... Astounding...

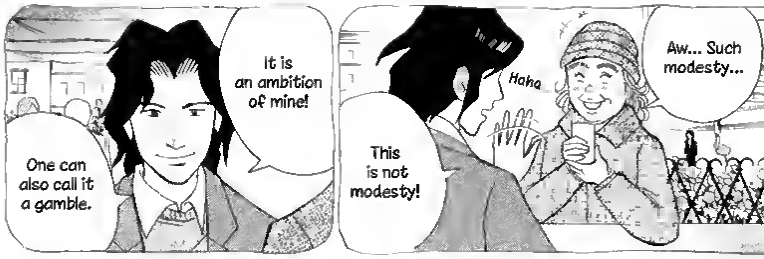

I see you can now produce the sound of "the piano in the forest" with ease no matter where you are.
Kai.


That doesn't sound like my version of the piece.
Nevertheless, it's awesome!!! He plays it just like I did when I was young
Is this even possible?


Is this what you wanted to do?
Sousuke,

Tell me, Sousuke, are you not aiming for first place?
Yeah, That's right.
Furthermore, being a Japanese, and someone with nothing whatsoever to do with Poland...
The first place has, indeed, never been won by the youngest contestant in the competition...
That's true...
Not at all! The first place isn't something one can get just by aiming for it.
But that is not my goal.
I'm glad that he has expressed such enthusiasm.
However, I do have a feeling that Kai is going for the first place!

The sound of Kai's piano can be heard...
As long as...


It is an ambition of mine!
One can also call it a gamble.
Haha
This is not modesty!
Aw... Such modesty...

Once people have had a taste of it, not a single person will forget what they have heard, right?!
My real intention is to get people throughout the world to listen to the sound that only belongs to Kai.

If Kai is in the limelight of the entire world, the bastards from the Edge of the Forest will have no choice but to let him go...
No one would let Kai remain buried within the Edge of the Forest, would they?!

And I will do anything to make that a reality!
I want to break Kai's chains and let him soar freely!
If Kai becomes "The World's Kai Ichinose," no one will be able to lay a finger on him.
This is more important than things like scores and rankings.

MOVEMENT IV
"FINALE", PRESTO NON TANTO
S...Such brilliance...
This surge of power near the end of his performance... It's different from the accumulated force of an engine...
A...
Ajino... You...
He pulled off such a natural shift... after that ethereally beautiful pianissimo.
This propulsion...

What sort of student are you pitting against my son?!
Kai,
You're doing great!

How I have longed...
K...Kai...
...To hear such music on the international stage.

Kai...
That final note of yours...

...Extending into the light.
...Leaving a golden ray behind...
Pierced through...
...my body...

ヒソヒソ
ヴィヴァーチェ

ブラボー!!
ブラボー!!

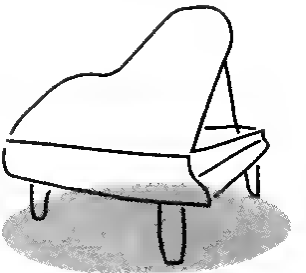
...And cheers, loud as the sound of raging waves, that can be heard even from the outside of the hall.
The hall is submerged in shouts of "bravo", deafening as the rumbling of the earth.
I can only stand here in a daze.
I...
I can't face Ajino if I can't do better than this!

Haha... Looks like the cheers aren't stopping any time soon, Kai!
Kai!
Sousuke doesn't seem to care about ranking!
To make that happen, Sousuke is even willing to "give his own life" ... That's how he put it.
He said it is his one and only wish!
...To direct the world's gaze onto you.
All Sousuke wants is to show the world what you've got,
Eh?

I know.
Yeah!
But Grandpa Jean...
You have to answer to those cheers!
Eh?
ダダダダ!!
I want to...
37

37
...Truly repay Ajino for everything he's done for me!
I won't be able to...
Hmm. Another bow, eh?
Otherwise...
I want to achieve more than Ajino's ambition.

Because I have a feeling that if I don't,
I will lose Ajino forever.
Curtain Call END



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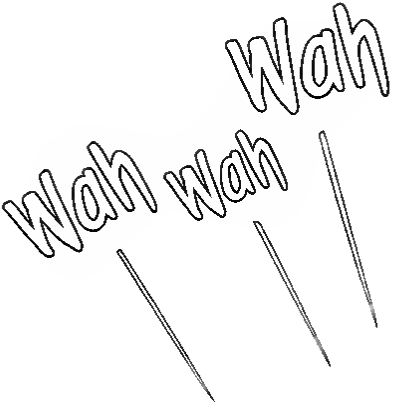

Wah
Wah
wah

Amazing...
I watched Kai as he answered the Curtain Call twice.
Why...

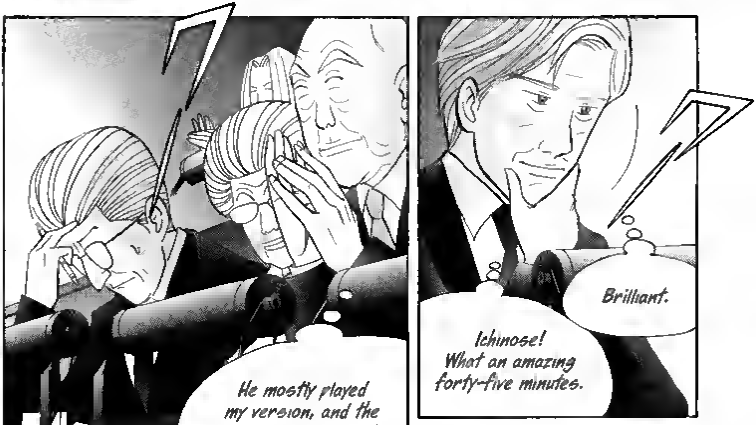
Chapter 172
The End of the Second Round
Have I... encountered such a formidable opponent?

If...
I can't do better than this, then I have no right to stand before Ajino.

What is this burning feeling?
This...
This...
This feeling that's surging from the bottom of my heart...
Burning feeling akin to anger that's about to explode...

He's pretty amazing, Hyung.
What is this strong desire to completely annihilate this guy?

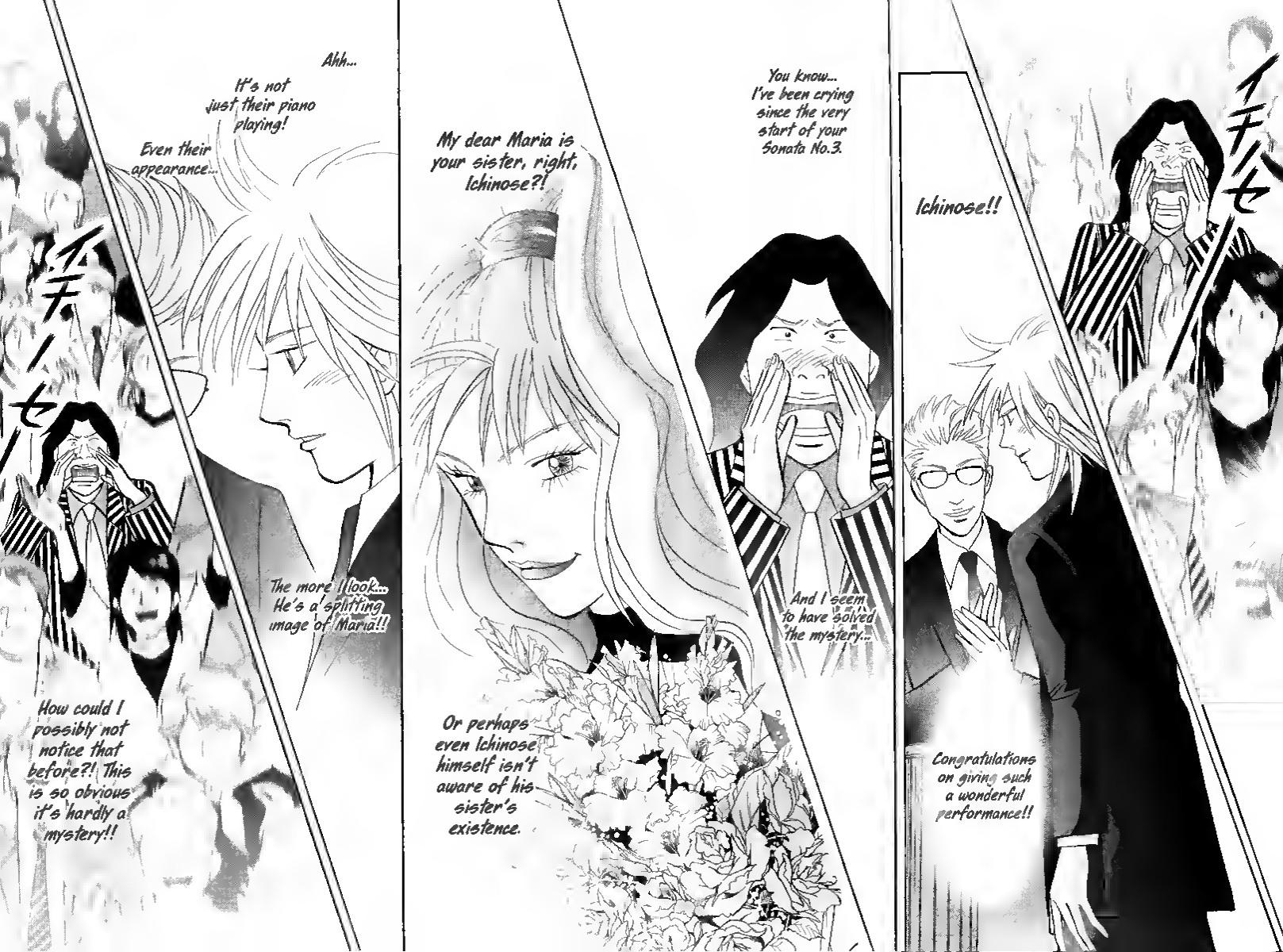
But to me, he's a guy worth defeating.
You're kidding! I'll be the one to defeat him, Hyung.
Now is not the time for chit chat.
True! It's no time to fool around and chatter.

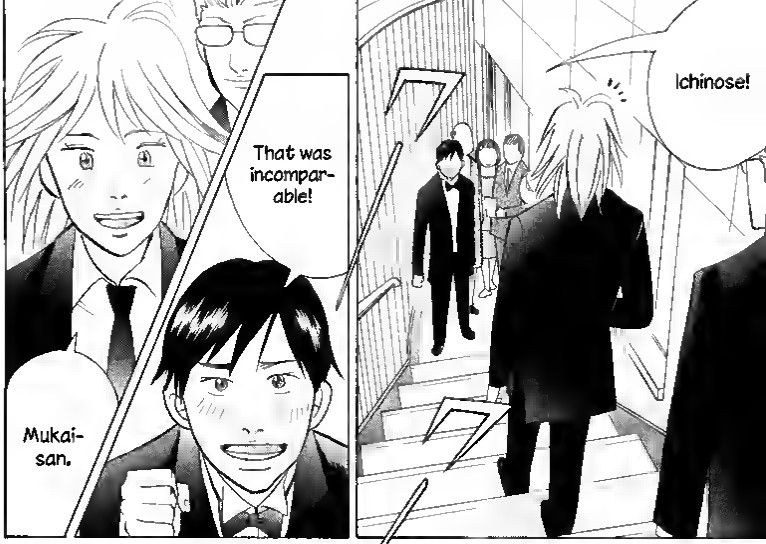

He mostly played my version, and the songs were played outstandingly.
Ichinose! What an amazing forty-five minutes.
Brilliant.

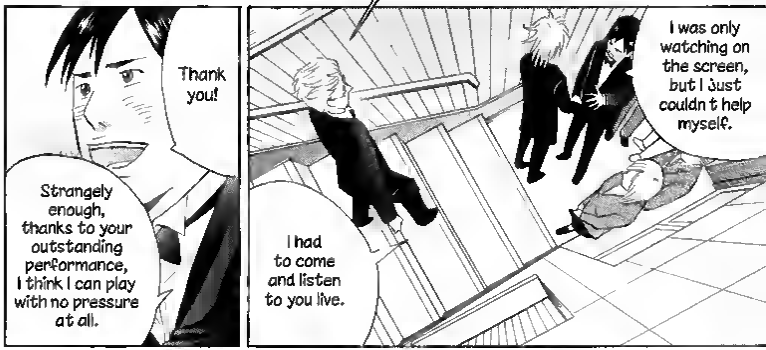
He...
He's a threat.

ed to the next
NO
Why didn't we get rid of him in the first round?!
Is about to be crowned!
Why does he have to appear just as Szymanowski, the best of Poland...
If we let him into the final, it would be very dangerous.

If only I hadn't listened to him play.
What should I do, Amelia?
37
Ichinose!!

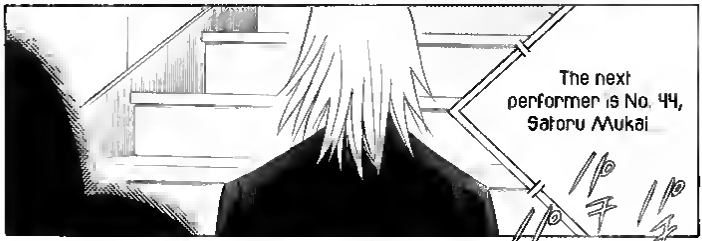

Ichinose!!
Congratulations on giving such a wonderful performance!!
You know... I've been crying since the very start of your Sonata No.3.
And I seem to have solved the mystery...
My dear Maria is your sister, right, Ichinose?!
Or perhaps even Ichinose himself isn't aware of his sister's existence.
Ahh...
It's not just their piano playing!
Even their appearance...
The more I look... He's a splitting image of Maria!!
How could I possibly not notice that before?! This is so obvious it's hardly a mystery!!

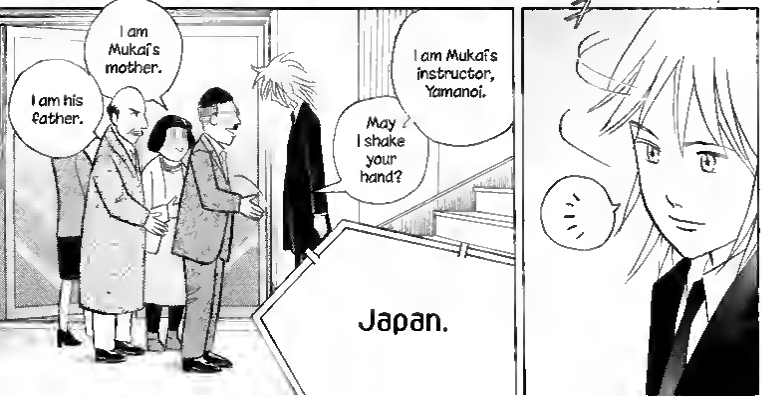

That was incompar-able!
Mukai-san.
Ichinose!


Thank you!
Strangely enough, thanks to your outstanding performance, I think I can play with no pressure at all.
I had to come and listen to you live.
I was only watching on the screen, but I just couldn't help myself.

The one who received courage is me.
Thank you, Mukai-san. You always give me courage.

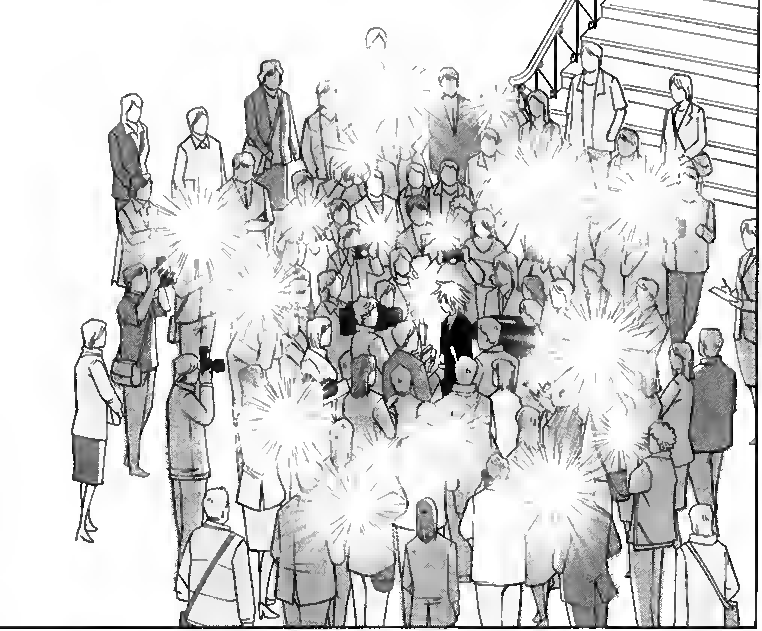
I will do my best and enjoy the stage.


The next performer is No. 44, Satoru Mukai.

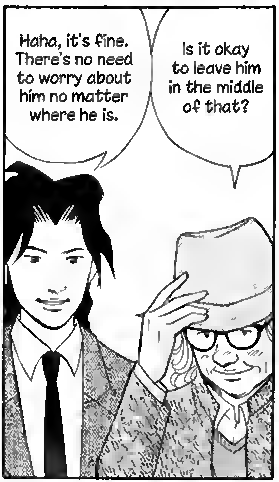

I am Mukai's mother.
I am his father.
I am Mukai's instructor, Yamanoi.
May I shake your hand?
Japan.

His set list is...

Mr. Ichinose, please give us a few words...
Please accept an interview.
Ichinose-san, I am Monika, an interpreter.
It's really cramped in here. Would you like to go somewhere more comfortable?

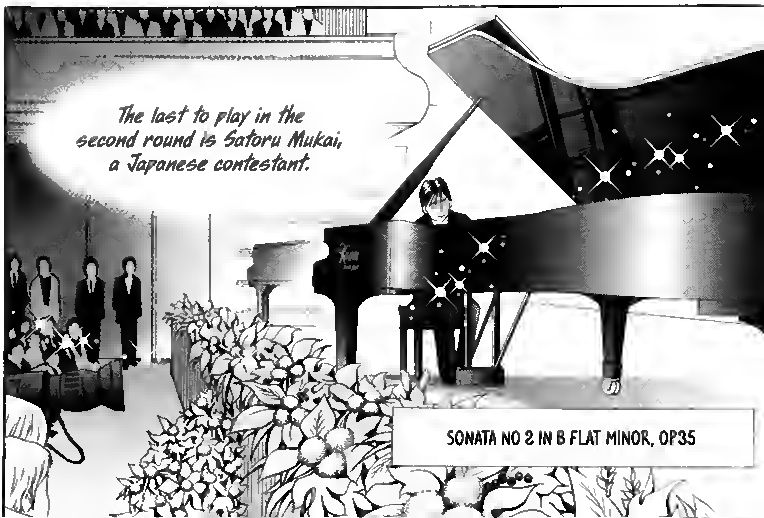


Also...
That's true, but...

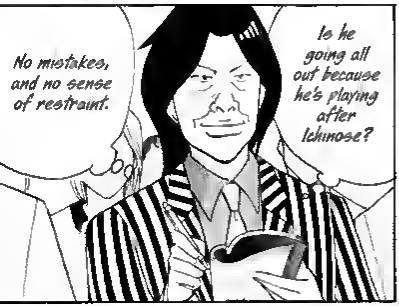

Haha, it's fine. There's no need to worry about him no matter where he is.
Is it okay to leave him in the middle of that?

Ah... That's right.
Do your best, Kai.

If he wanted to leave, he had his ways to escape.


The last to play in the second round is Satoru Mukai, a Japanese contestant.
SONATA NO 2 IN B FLAT MINOR, OP35

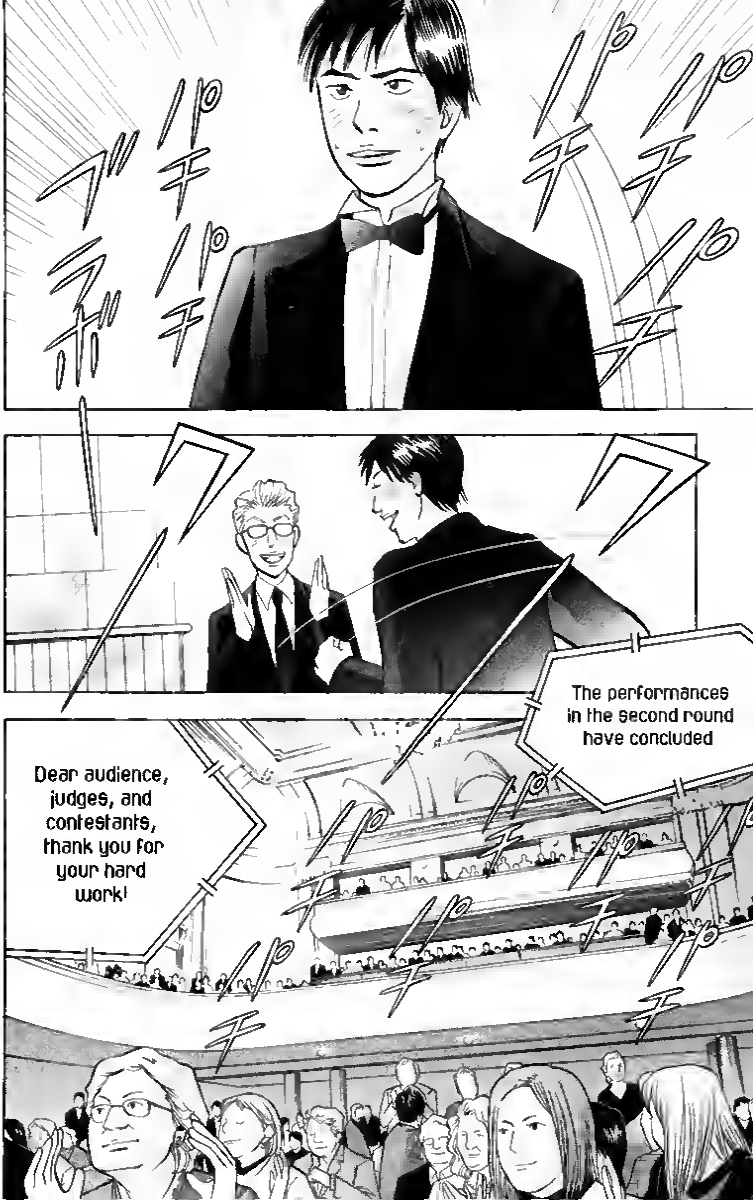
Following Wei Pang's and Sophie Ormesson's respective performances, this is yet another excellent portrayal of Sonata No. 2, a piece that I call the "Dissonance Sonata".


No mistakes, and no sense of restraint.
Is he going all out because he's playing after Ichinose?

And this time, in the second round...
Was there no mistake?

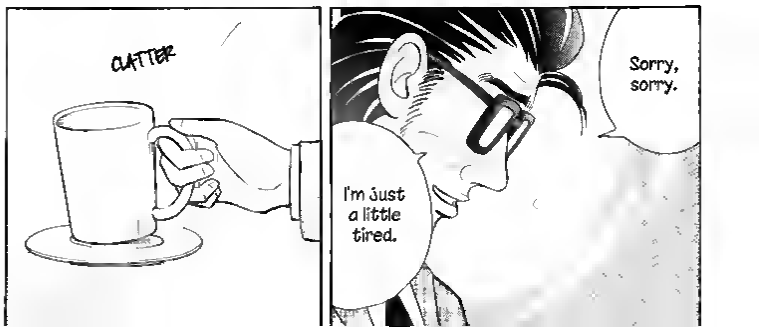
...It's flawless.

ハッ
ハッ


パチパチパチパチ
パチパチパチパチ
The performances in the second round have concluded
Dear audience, judges, and contestants, thank you for your hard work!
パチパチパチパチ

The judges will now begin their deliberation process.
The result of their impartial adjudication will be announced in about two hours. Please gather at the lobby on first floor at around five PM.
Youichirou-san!
Youichirou-san?

What's wrong?
You've been spacing out a lot.
Eh?
Please don't show that kind of expression in front of Shuuhei.
Seriously, you've been frowning all day.
The results will be announced in just two hours.


CLATTER
Sorry, sorry.
I'm just a little tired.

You seem to have been poisoned by Ichinose Kai's piano playing.
Youichirou-san, can I say something?
Sure. What is it?
His music is the precocious kind.
But sadly, he has probably already reached his peak.
In this regard, Shuuhei's playing still has much room for improvement, so his music has a bright future.
Therefore, please don't compare them and make yourself depressed.

The End of the Second Round/END

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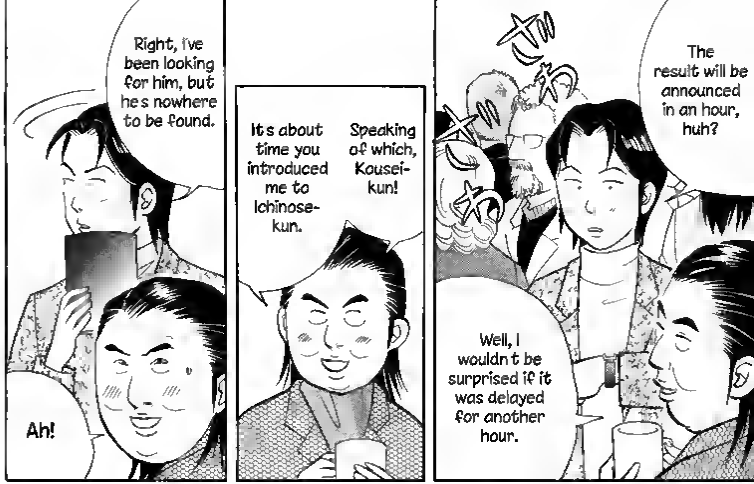
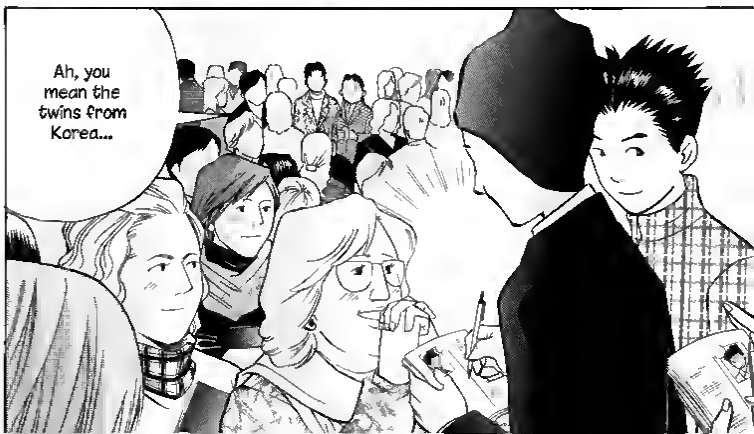
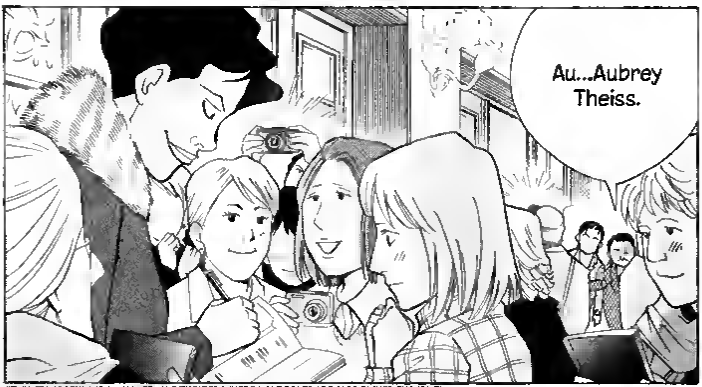
Chapter 173

The Stir of the Jury


Right, I've been looking for him, but he's nowhere to be found.
Ah!
It's about time you introduced me to Ichinose-kun.
Speaking of which, Kousei-kun!
The result will be announced in an hour, huh?
Well, I wouldn't be surprised if it was delayed for another hour.

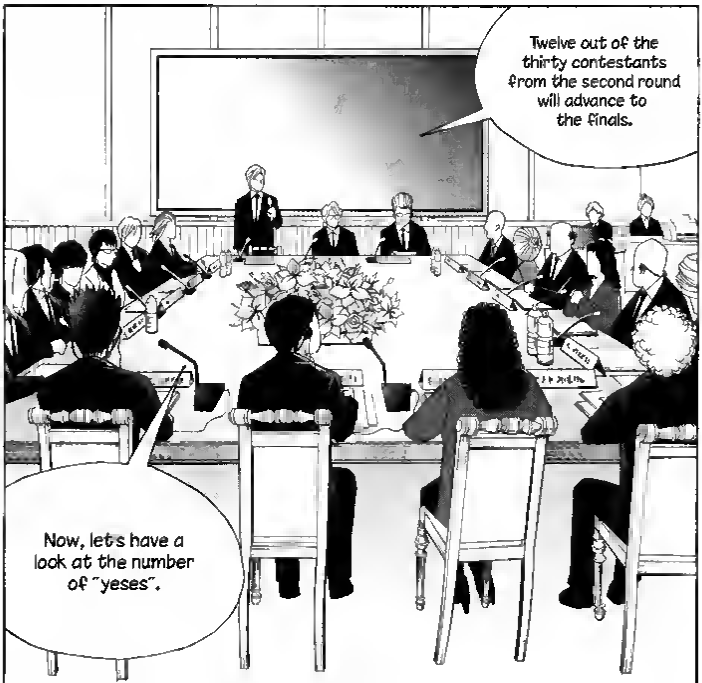
Kou-Kousei-kun, check that out!

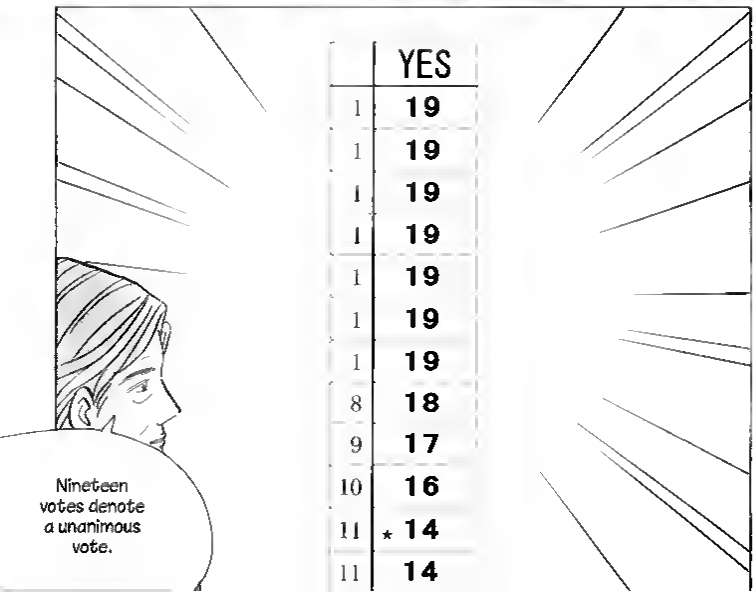

Ah, you mean the twins from Korea...



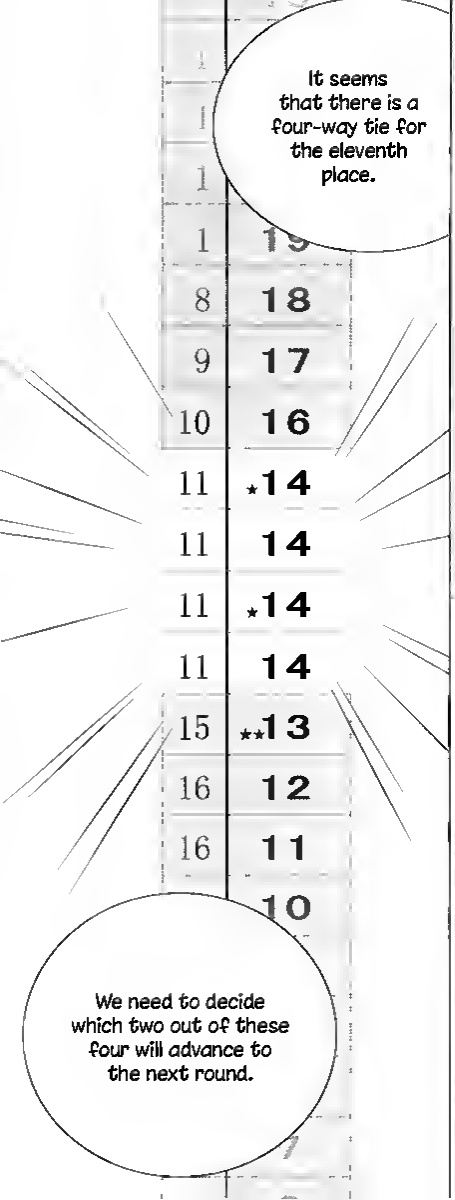
*T/N TAKARAZUKA IS AN ALL FEMALE THEATER WHERE MALE ROLES ARE ALSO PLAYED BY WOMEN. THE WOMEN WHO PLAY THE MALE ROLES ARE KNOWN TO ATTRACT A LOT OF FEMALE FANS.

Ahem... I'm sorry to have kept you all waiting. We have finished calculating the total scores.


Twelve out of the thirty contestants from the second round will advance to the finals.
Now, let's have a look at the number of "yeses".



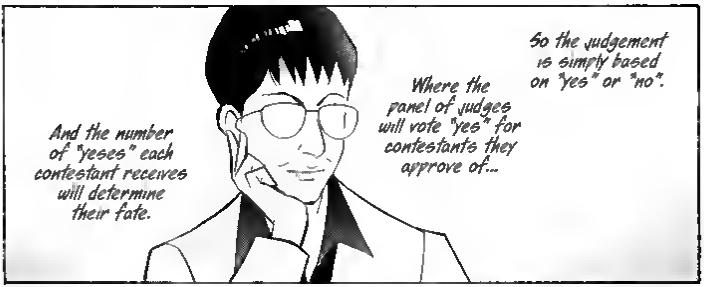
	YES
1	19
1	19
1	19
1	19
1	19
1	19
1	19
8	18
9	17
10	16
11	★ 14
11	14


It seems that there is a four-way tie for the eleventh place.
We need to decide which two out of these four will advance to the next round.

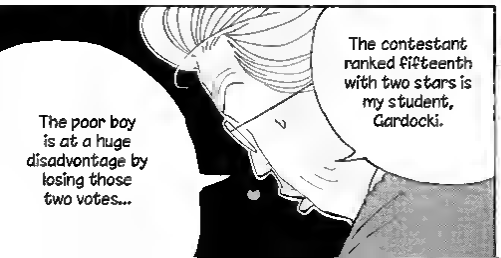
The ranking is arranged according to the number of "yeses", with those who received the most "yeses" ranked the highest. From this, we are expecting to select the twelve finalists.

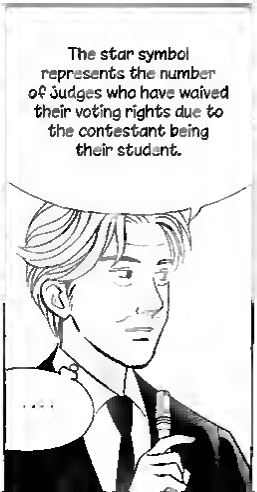
	YES
1	19
1	19
1	19
1	19
1	19
1	19
1	19
8	18
9	17
10	18
11	★14
11	14
11	★14
11	14
15	★★13
16	12
16	11
18	10
19	9
19	★ 8
21	8
21	7
23	★ 6
24	★ 5
24	★ 4
26	2
27	0
28	0
29	0
30	0

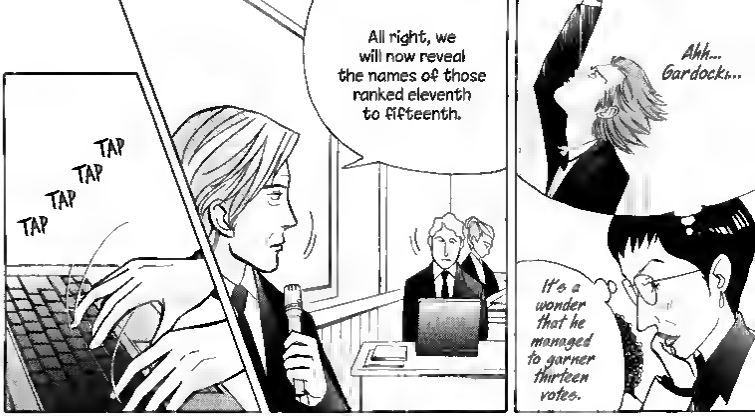
There are four contestants with an equal number of votes?!
Ugh, this is gonna be a pain...
Not ta mention that seven contestants received a unanimous vote.
That goes ta show the high level of standard that the contestants this year have.


So the judgement is simply based on "yes" or "no".
Where the panel of judges will vote "yes" for contestants they approve of...
And the number of "yeses" each contestant receives will determine their fate.

It shouldn't be just these four!!!
I suggest we reveal the names of the four contestants and get this over with!


The poor boy is at a huge disadvantage by losing those two votes...
The contestant ranked fifteenth with two stars is my student, Gardocki.


The star symbol represents the number of judges who have waived their voting rights due to the contestant being their student.
...


All right, we will now reveal the names of those ranked eleventh to fifteenth.
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
Ahh... Gardocki...
It's a wonder that he managed to garner thirteen votes.

9	17			
10	16			
11	★14	No. 2	Shuhei AMAMIYA	(JPN)
11	★14	No. 15	Joseph CHAN	(CAN)
11	14	No. 22	Evgenii DMITRIEV	(RUS)
11	14	No. 36	Daniel HUNT	(USA)
15	★★13	No. 31	Jan GARDOCKI	(POL)
16	12			

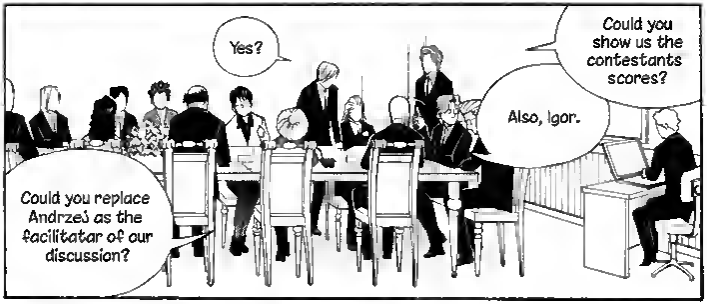
Oh my, Amamiya Junior is in a precarious position.
I'd like to know the nationality of the contestonts ranking first to fifteenth...
I would like to see the balance as well.
In that case, to ease the process of decision-making,
Shall we also reveal their scores?
Hold on! Before that...

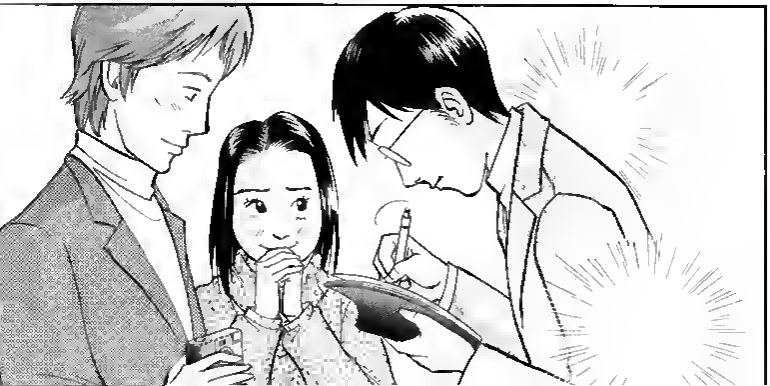
Balance?
When you look at it that way, even the members of this jury aren't balanced!
Hmm...
Considering the balance, it's strange to have three Japanese in the top fifteen...
Let's just eliminate Amamiya from Japan for the time being...

FRA	1
CHN	1
DEU	1
UKR	1
JPN	3
KOR	2
CAN	1
RUS	1
POL	2
ARG	1
USA	1

Could you stop beating around the bush, Weber?
The Japanese sponsors had already been turned down before the competition.
For now we should be focusing on the performances.

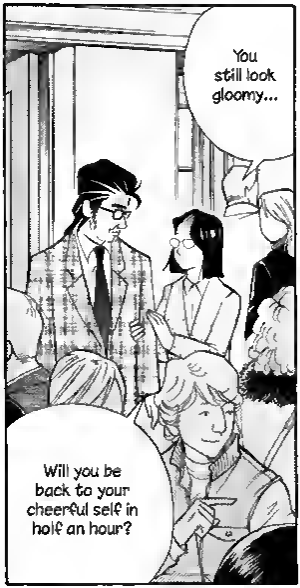
But before that, let's look at their scores!
You're allowed to have your say since you didn't get to participate in evaluating Amamiya's performance.
And we will take your words into consideration...
Hey, Andrzej.


Could you replace Andrzej as the facilitator of our discussion?
Yes?
Also, Igor.
Could you show us the contestants scores?



Hey Yoichirou-san, are you all right?
Eh?
It sure doesn't look easy to be popular!
It somehow feels as if he's no longer just our Shuhei-san.

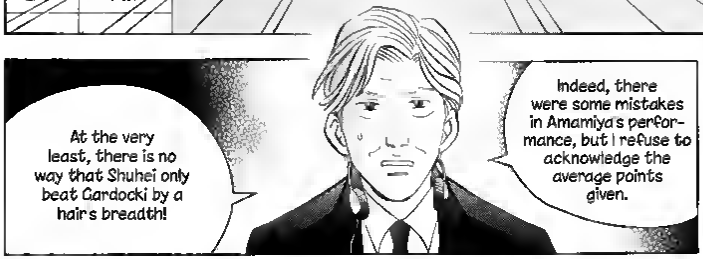
There's no way you have forgotten! In half an hour, the results will be announced. It's making me so nervous!
Half an hour?

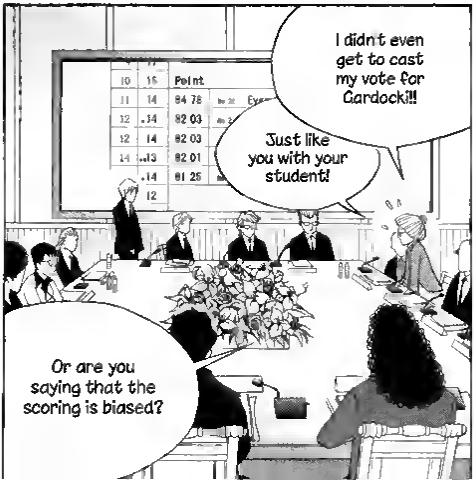

You still look gloomy...
Will you be back to your cheerful self in half an hour?

Ah, yeah... You're right...
Is that so?!

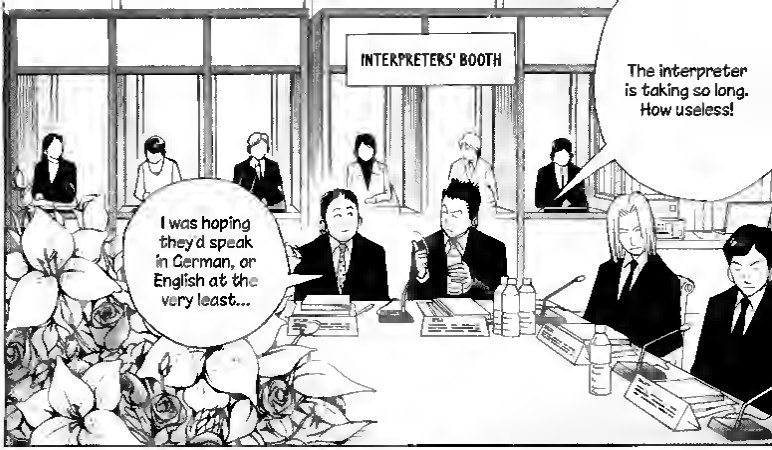
Could Shuhei be...
Is it really good news that's awaiting us?
Sitting on the borderline?!
Could Shuhei be...

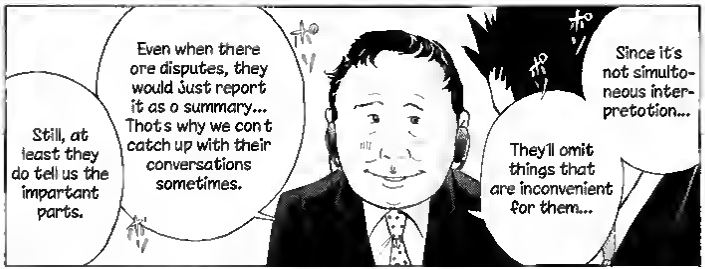
		Point			
9	17				
10	16	Point			
11	14	84.78	No. 22	Evgenii DMITRIEV	(RUS)
12	★14	82.03	No. 2	Shuhei AMAMIYA	(JPN)
12	14	82.03	No. 36	Daniel HUNT	(USA)
14	★★13	82.01	No. 31	Jan GARDOCKI	(POL)
15	★14	81.25	No. 15	Joseph CHAN	(CAN)
16	12				

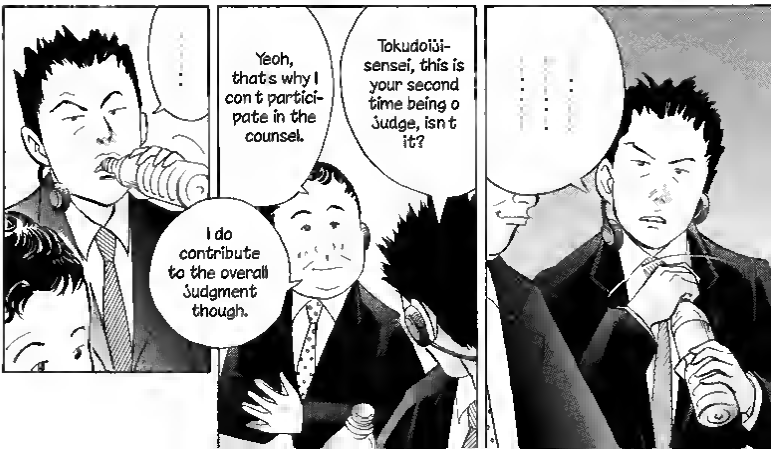

At the very least, there is no way that Shuhei only beat Gardocki by a hair's breadth!
Indeed, there were some mistakes in Amamiya's performance, but I refuse to acknowledge the average points given.



Anna Bilińska
Who would have thought that would put us in this mess..
Damn, Anna begged us to favor Gardocki and we did as she asked.
That's not what I meant, but there should be a marked difference between the scores of the two.
No wonder Andrzej is mad.
Ah, so Anna might really have been trading points with the other judges...
Neither do I...
Well, I don't understand Polish at all, so...
Touma-kun, Touma-kun! What's all this fuss about?
KUZOU TOUMA (JAPAN)
TOKUDAIJI DAIGO (JAPAN)


INTERPRETERS' BOOTH
The interpreter is taking so long. How useless!
I was hoping they'd speak in German, or English at the very least...

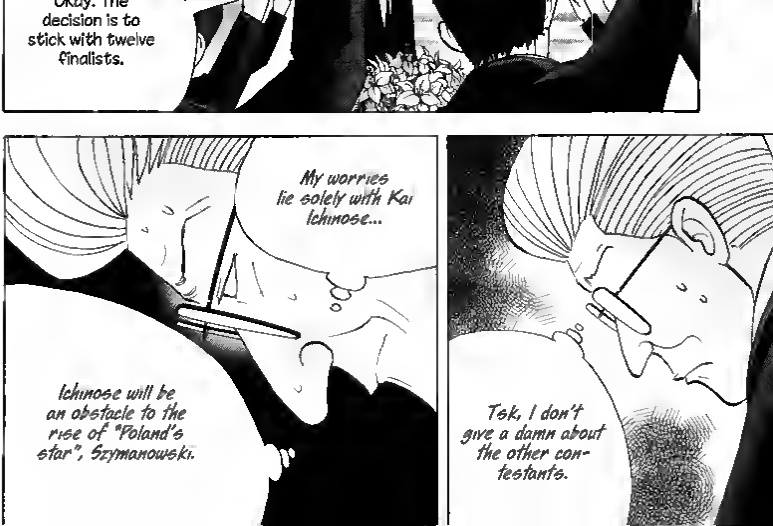

Since it's not simultaneous interpretation...
They'll omit things that are inconvenient for them...
Even when there are disputes, they would just report it as a summary... That's why we can't catch up with their conversations sometimes.
Still, at least they do tell us the important parts.

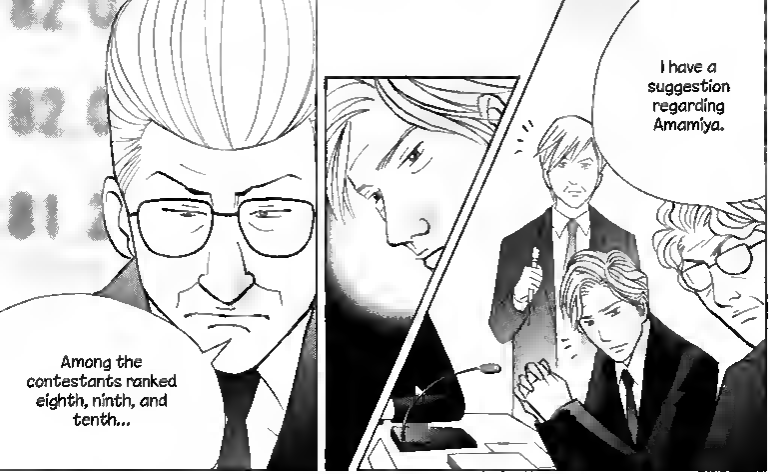

Tokudoiji-sensei, this is your second time being a judge, isn't it?
Yeah, that's why I can't participate in the counsel.
I do contribute to the overall judgment though.
.....
.....

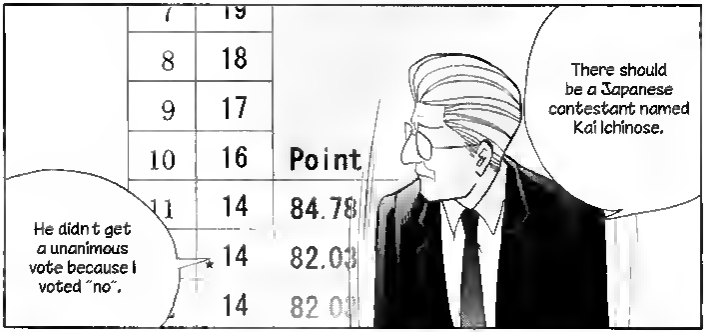
How about we increase the number of finalists?
I will never approve of Gardocki's advancement to the finals.
How rude!
Chairman Jasiński, please say something!
Well...
To be frank,
Therefore, I was tempted to make an announcement that only ten contestants would enter the finals...
I believe that there are less than 10 contestants who truly understand the "Spirit of Chopin".
But let's follow the rules and decide on twelve finalists.

Those who agree, please kindly raise your hand.
The chairman's wish is to follow the rules and select only the top twelve contestants.
While some have proposed an increase in the number of finalists...

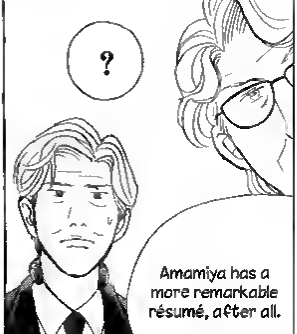
Okay. The decision is to stick with twelve finalists.


My worries lie solely with Kai Ichinose...
Ichinose will be an obstacle to the rise of "Poland's star", Szymanowski.
Tsk, I don't give a damn about the other contestants.


I have a suggestion regarding Amamiya.
Among the contestants ranked eighth, ninth, and tenth...


There should be a Japanese contestant named Kai Ichinose.
Point
84.78
He didn't get a unanimous vote because I voted "no".

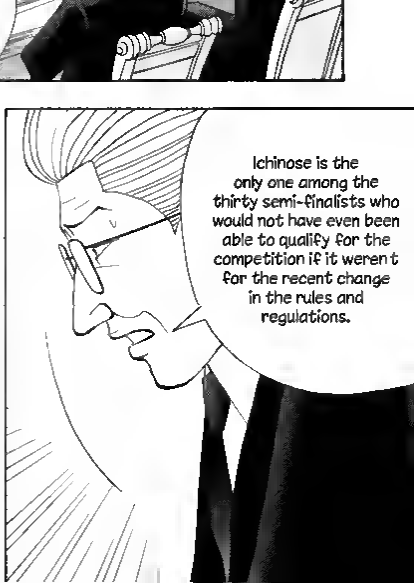
The reason being, Ichinose's piano is out of the ordinary in this competition.
It can't be evaluated on the same level as the others.
To put it bluntly, if Ichinose were selected, then we would have to eliminate all the other contestants.

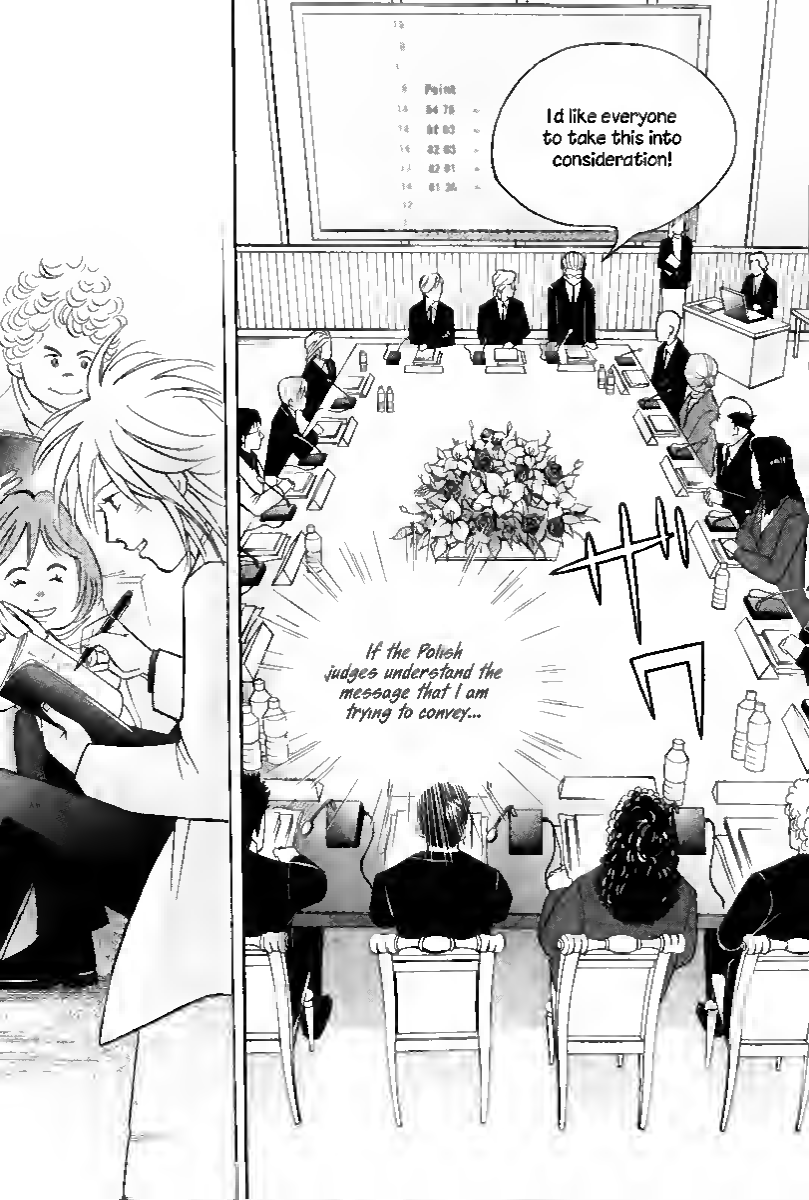

?
Amamiya has a more remarkable résumé, after all.

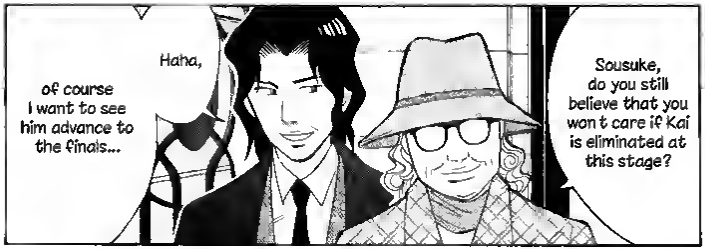
So I suggest we take Ichinose off the list...
And let Amamiya stay instead.

Ichinose, on the other hand, has never attended a music academy.
Not to mention, he has never even participated in any competition, much less international ones!

I know that these are just absurd excuses...
But if everything goes smoothly, I may be able to lobby for a new list of finalists.

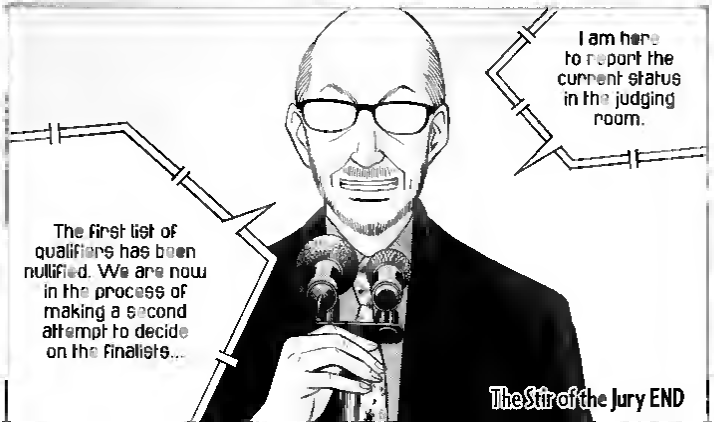

Ichinose is the only one among the thirty semi-finalists who would not have even been able to qualify for the competition if it weren't for the recent change in the rules and regulations.


I'd like everyone to take this into consideration!
If the Polish judges understand the message that I am trying to convey...


Sousuke, do you still believe that you won't care if Kai is eliminated at this stage?
Haha, of course I want to see him advance to the finals...

But it was a blessing that he was even allowed into this competition.
It used to be a requirement to have a good résumé in past competitions just to join...
However, they changed that rule to allow entry based on the contestant's performance in the preliminary rounds.

Yeah...
You were afraid that those bastards in the Edge of the Forest would find out and interfere, right?
But...
I should have let Kai participate in more piano competitions...
It was an all-or-nothing bet.
Kai has barely passed the minimum qualifying age.
Ahem.
キャ
The rest is just a matter of luck.
But since Kai already managed to show the world his own unique music in the second round...


I am here to report the current status in the judging room.
The first list of qualifiers has been nullified. We are now in the process of making a second attempt to decide on the finalists...

The Stir of the Jury END

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Artwork from "Zetsuen no Tempest"

SHANGHAI
. . .

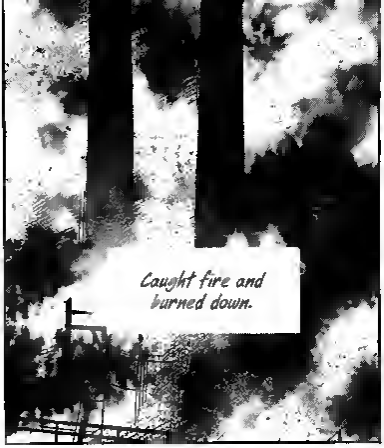
Victoria works people like slaves..
This sucks... Nothing good ever comes out of working with her.

SIGH

Nothing...
As expected, nothing good has come out of this.

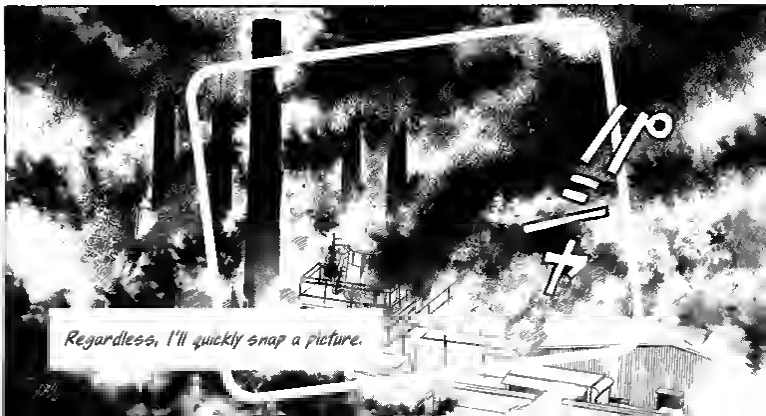
Chapter 174

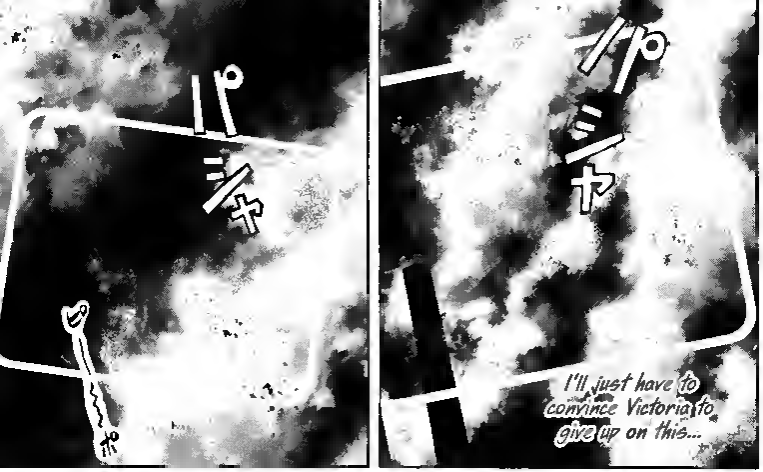
Qualification of Being a Judge

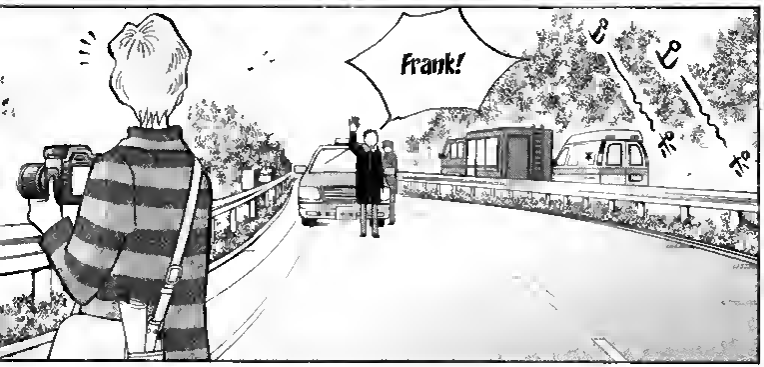

Caught fire and burned down.

The factory that I was supposed to interview...
ゴホッ
ゴホッ

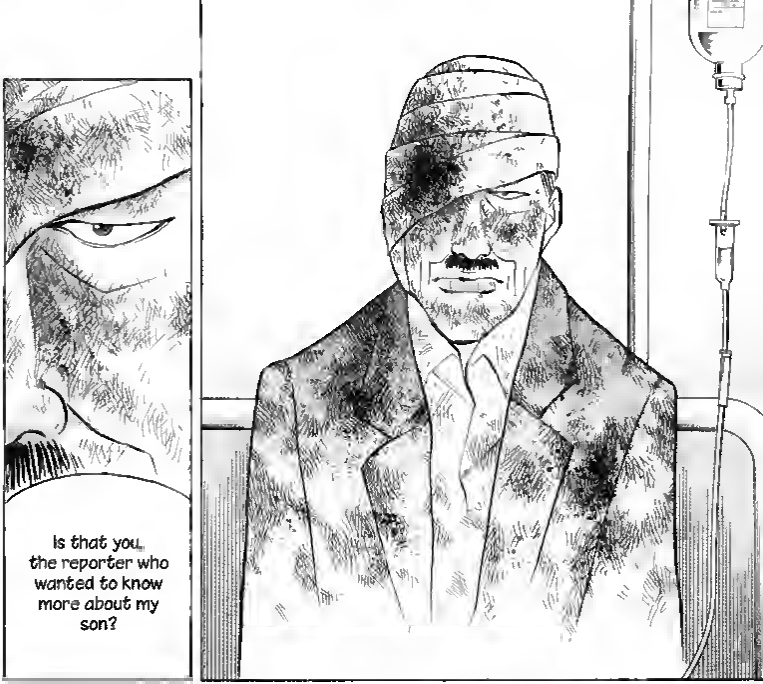
Judging from the situation, the factory owner, Hao Pang, is likely to be injured.
Even if he isn't injured, an interview today is out of the question.


パシャ
Regardless, I'll quickly snap a picture.

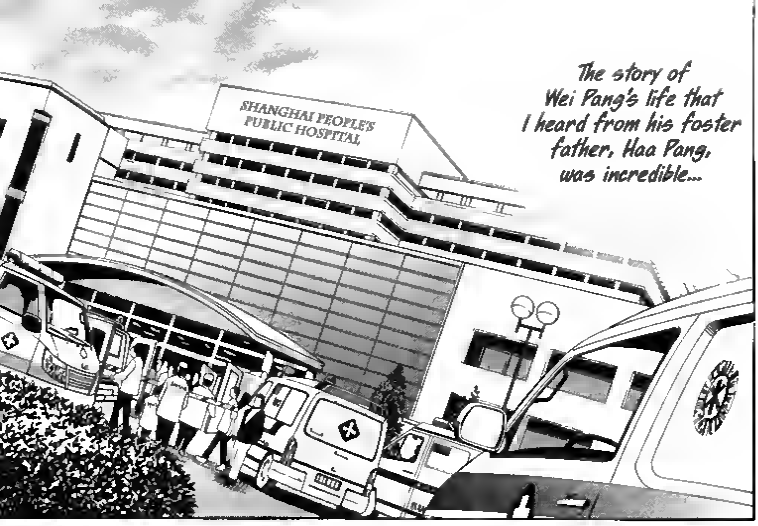

パシャ
パシャ
パシャ
I'll just have to convince Victoria to give up on this...

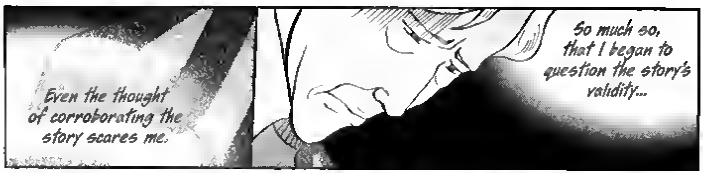

Frank!
ピピピピ

TAXI
I received information that Hao Pang has been sent to a nearby hospital!
What will you do now? Should we go to the hospital to verify it?

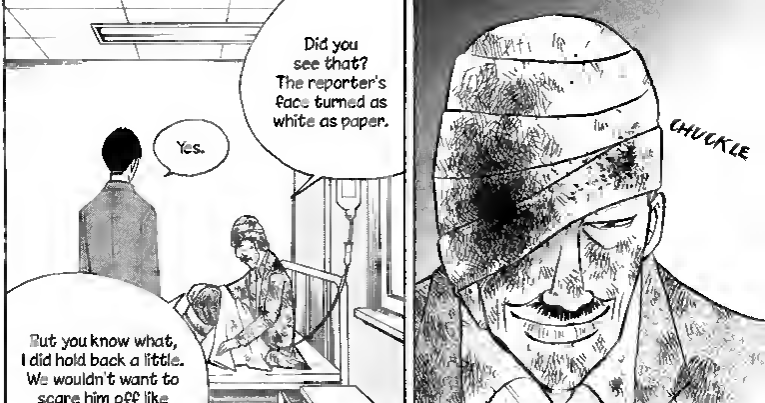

Is that you, the reporter who wanted to know more about my son?

Y"
Y"
He said that he's willing to talk openly since he doesn't have long ta live...
You're in luck!


SHANGHAI PEOPLE'S PUBLIC HOSPITAL
The story of Wei Pang's life that I heard from his foster father, Haa Pang, was incredible...

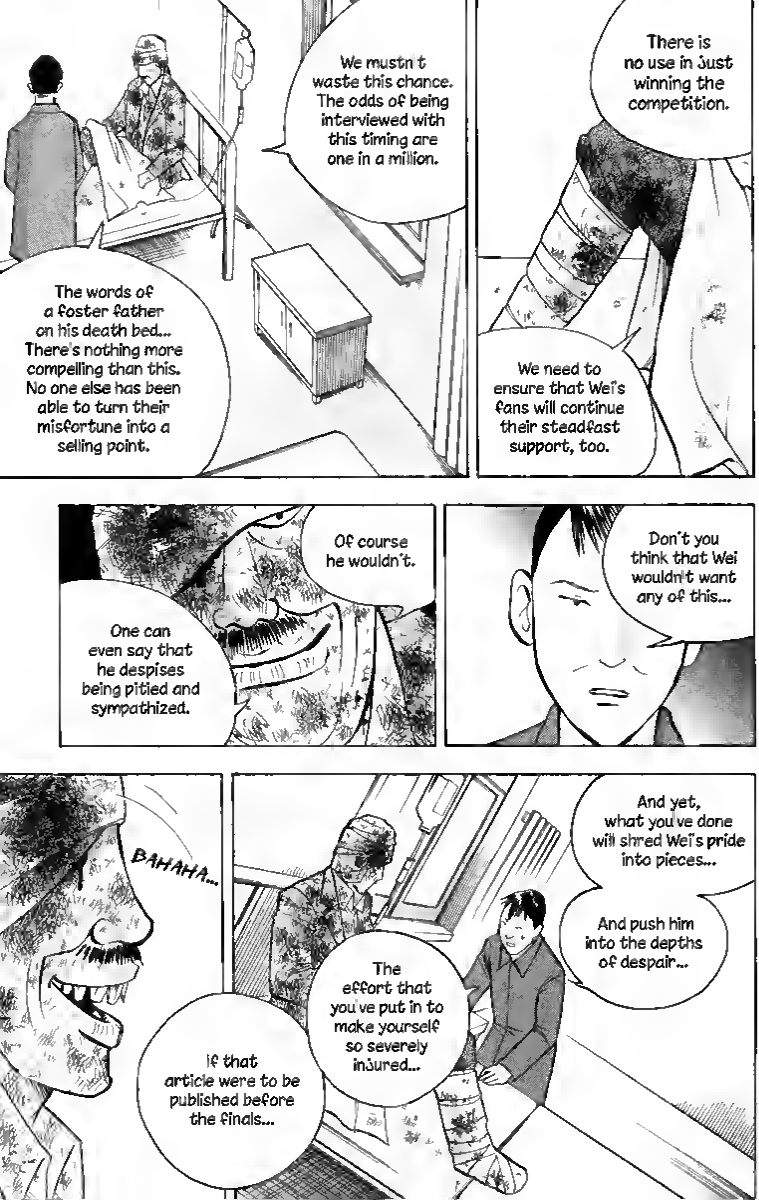

Even the thought of corroborating the story scares me.
So much so, that I began to question the story's validity...

I didn't think you had such a weak stomach.
Well, my speciality lies in entertainment...
Ugh, I can't stand the sight of blood. Let alone being this close to a life-and-death situation.
Aren't you going to take a picture of this place?
The explosion itself is a scoop!

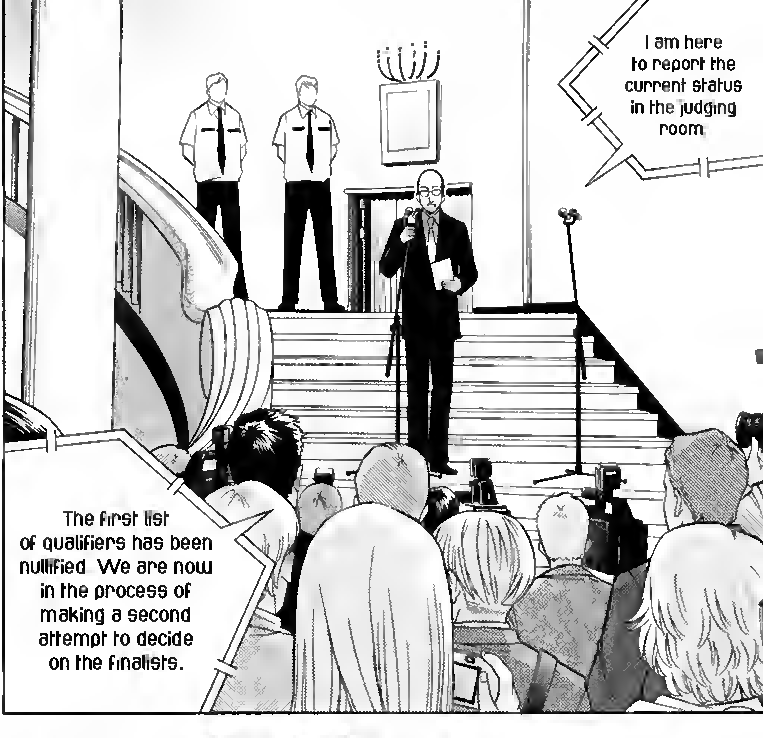

Did you see that? The reporter's face turned as white as paper.
Yes.
But you know what, I did hold back a little. We wouldn't want to scare him off like that...
CHUCKLE

If that pathetic reporter does his job well,
Wei will become known as the "tragic hero"... No, he'll be hailed as the "unyielding hero".

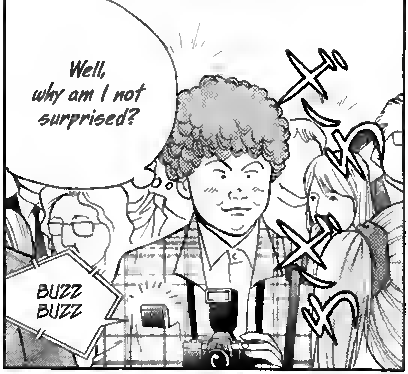
Listen carefully!
Skill alone does not make one a star.
Even without going through all this trouble, I believe Wei would still...
Of course, but we should always be prepared for the worst.


We mustn't waste this chance. The odds of being interviewed with this timing are one in a million.
The words of a foster father on his death bed... There's nothing more compelling than this. No one else has been able to turn their misfortune into a selling point.
There is no use in just winning the competition.
We need to ensure that Wei's fans will continue their steadfast support, too.
Of course he wouldn't.
One can even say that he despises being pitied and sympathized.
Don't you think that Wei wouldn't want any of this...
BAHAHA...
If that article were to be published before the finals...
The effort that you've put in to make yourself so severely injured...
And yet, what you've done will shred Wei's pride into pieces...
And push him into the depths of despair...

Anyway, I've checked out the story.
And have taken care to avoid any horrific expressions, in order to create an article that is reader-friendly.
In any case, Victoria will be really pleased with it.
Sigh, this is such a depressing job...
It's been three days since the interview...
Cut the nonsense.
Being able to struggle his way upward from depths of despair has always been his forte, after all...


I am here to report the current status in the judging room.
The first list of qualifiers has been nullified. We are now in the process of making a second attempt to decide on the finalists.

We ask for your patience until the result is ready.

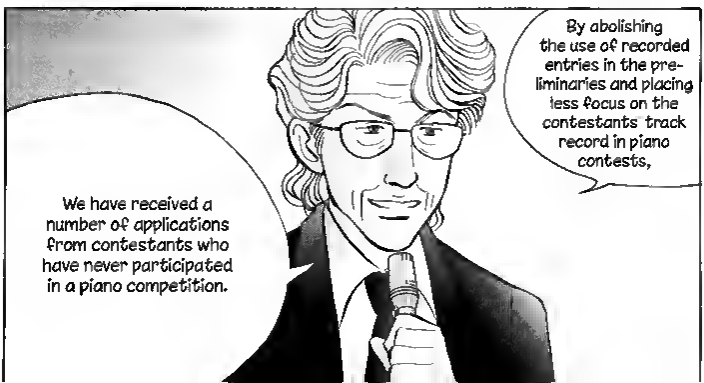

Well, why am I not surprised?
BUZZ BUZZ

Yes... Victoria!
Where are you? This is a crucial moment...

What?

A scoop on Wei Pang?

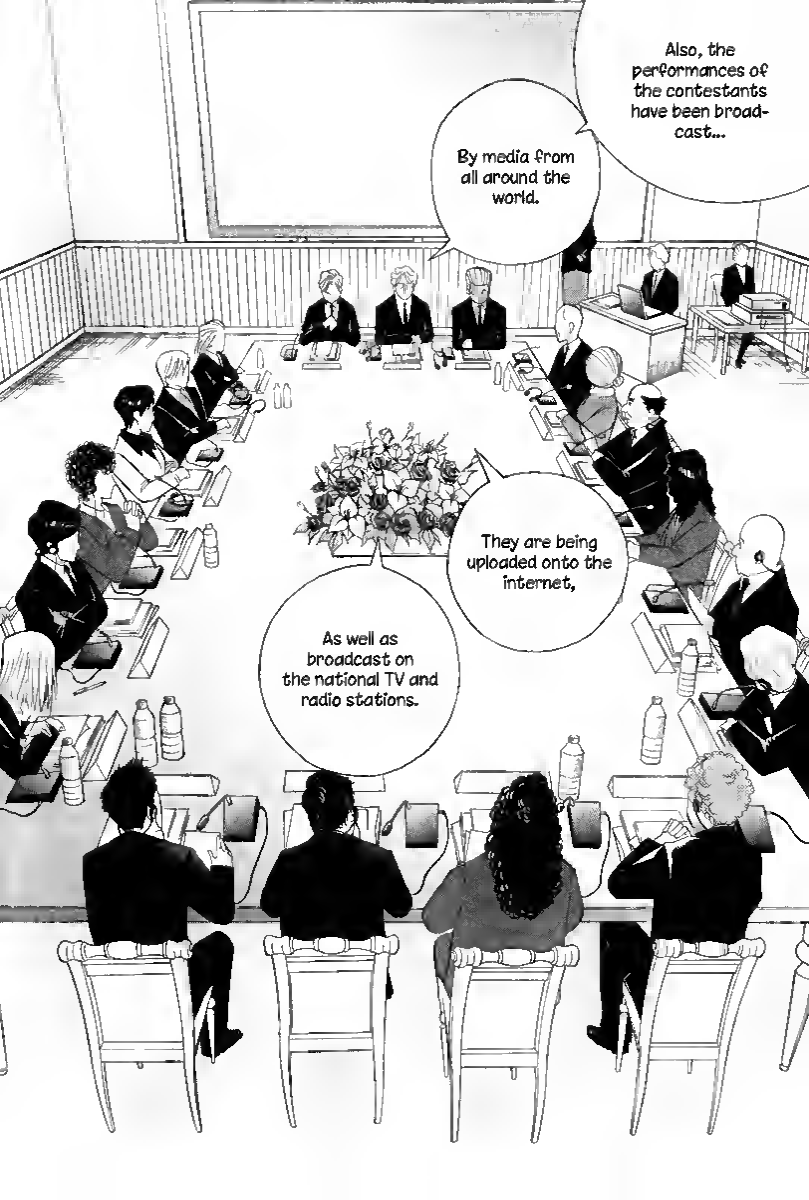
Before we go over the scores again, there is something that I would like each and every one of you to verify...
The changes to the rules made 5 years ago, announced immediately after the previous Chopin Competition.


By abolishing the use of recorded entries in the preliminaries and placing less focus on the contestants' track record in piano contests,
We have received a number of applications from contestants who have never participated in a piano competition.

As some of you still seem to be oblivious to the reasons for the alterations in the rules, I shall repeat them once again.
Among them, only one made it to the second round.
And that person is Kai Ichinose.
It is therefore impossible to compare the contestants performances fairly without listening to them live.
Firstly, the conditions of the country in which an entry is recorded lead to an obvious bias.
However, this can only be achieved by those who are well-off...
And filled their resume with countless participation records.
As for competition track records, there are contestants who have participated in competitions across the world,

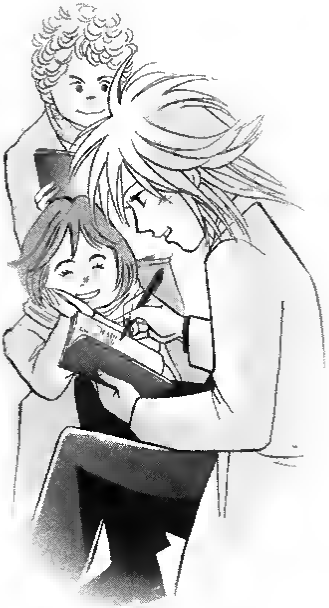
WALDEMAR EKIERT (POLAND)
LIU MIN (CHINA)
The aim of this Chopin Competition is to discover those with talent, regardless of their financial status.
ANNA BILINSKA (POLAND)
ANDRZEJ PAVLAS (POLAND/ VICE CHAIRMAN)
We do that by placing our trust in the judges who are responsible for the preliminary rounds.
IGOR GUTMANN (RUSSIA)
POLINA KARSAVINA (RUSSIA)
HOWARD BOYLE (BRITAIN)
KUZOU TOUMA (JAPAN)
Hmm.. So they're picking on Ichinose because of his competition track record...
KRISTINA BAYER (AUSTRIA)

PIOTR WEBER (POLAND)
JÓZEF STROIK (POLAND)
BENJAMIN ARTERMAN (ISRAEL)
Trust is also placed in all of us. That we will perform our duty as judges without bias.
ISABELLE LANDON (FRANCE)
ADAM JASIŃSKI (POLAND), CHAIRMAN OF THE JUDGING PANEL
For that reason, unless the majority of the twelve finalists are Japanese...
JAN TURCZYŃSKI (POLAND)
TOKUDAIJI DAIGO (JAPAN)
Having three of them among the finalists should not be a problem.
ALBERTO ROSSI (ITALY)
Ah, so some are unhappy about the fact that there are three Japanese finalists..
BEATA-BARBARA POLAŃSKA (POLAND)
JACOB MIRA (AMERICA)


Also, the performances of the contestants have been broadcast...
By media from all around the world.
They are being uploaded onto the internet,
As well as broadcast on the national TV and radio stations.

So I hope that each and every one of you will always remember the duty and pride of being a Judge...
And do the right thing for the contestants.

Qualification of Being a Judge END



Artwork from "Gu...rding".

Chapter 175

Finalists

Riiiing...

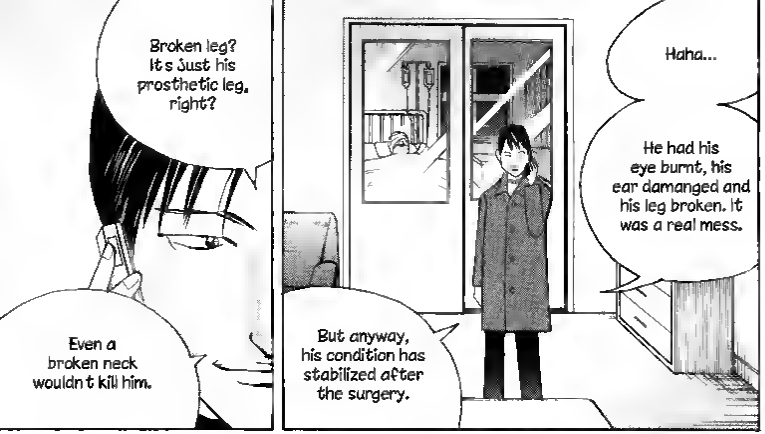
Hello.

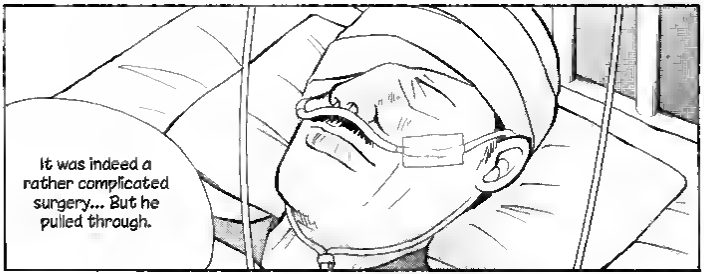
Wei, how is everything?

How are things on your side?
Is Hao still kicking?
So I suppose the results aren't out yet since I haven't been contacted yet.
I am not particularly worried about the results anyway.

I'm calling as it's almost time for the results of the second round to be announced...

Ah, you're right... But I'm not at the competition venue right now.
If you're concerned about the results, I'm sure the press there will keep you informed.

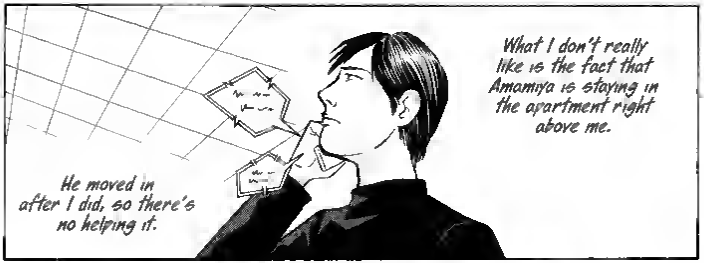

Broken leg? It's just his prosthetic leg, right?
Even a broken neck wouldn't kill him.
But anyway, his condition has stabilized after the surgery.
He had his eye burnt, his ear damanged and his leg broken. It was a real mess.
Haha...

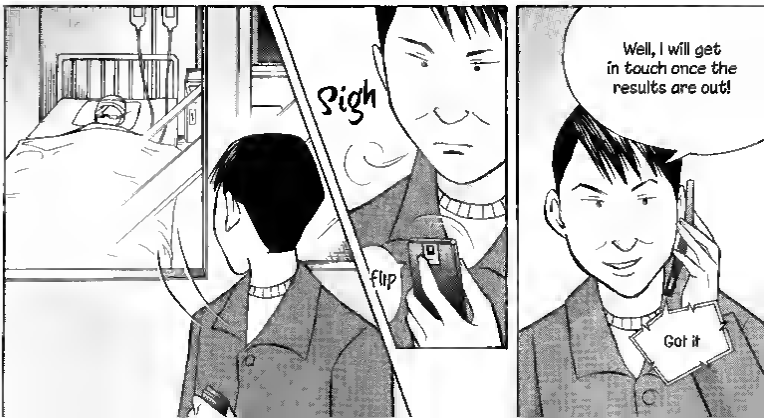

It was indeed a rather complicated surgery... But he pulled through.

I think I'm getting sick of Poland, let alone getting a new apartment... I am actually thinking about moving to another country...
Ah... Just forget about that...

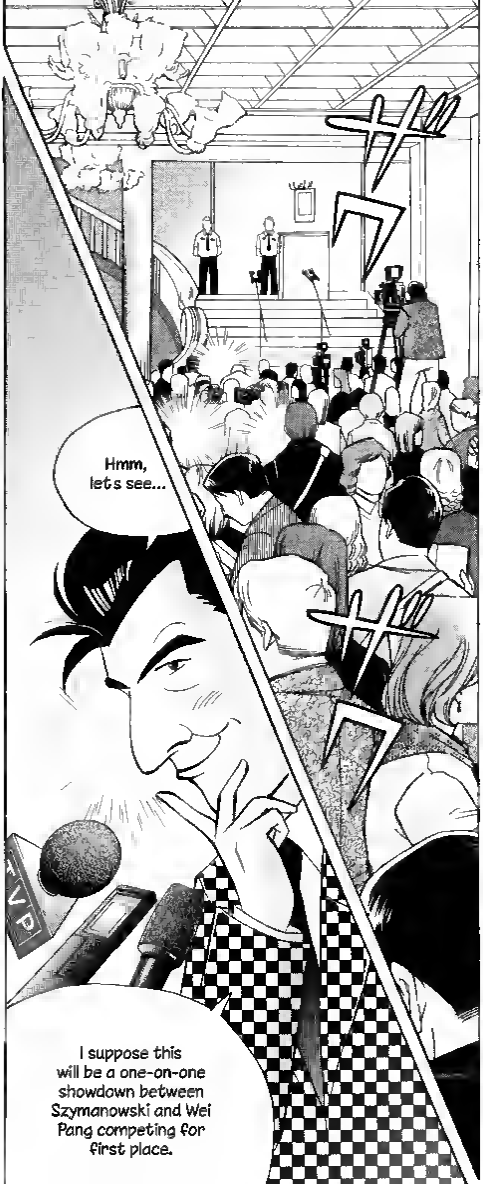
You mentioned that you wanted to move to a new apartment?
Is everything okay over there?

Tell me which countries you have in mind I'll look into them
This apartment is specifically designed for wealthy foreign students. It provides an environment suitable for piano practice at all times.
I have no complaints whatsoever about it...


What I don't really like is the fact that Amamiya is staying in the apartment right above me.
He moved in after I did, so there's no helping it.

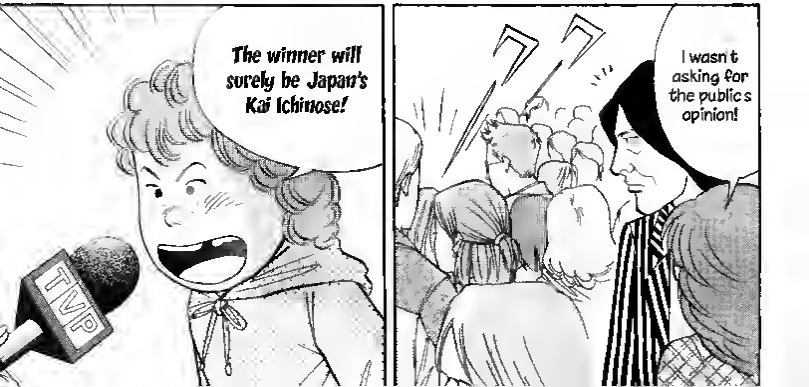

Sigh
flip
Well, I will get in touch once the results are out!
Got it

Even without doing all that, Wei could have won the competition for sure...
He won the Long-Thibaud Competition through his own ability, after all!
Hao insisted that everything he did was to ensure Wei Pang's victory, but what on earth has he done?
But Hao said that he's just taking these measures because he could not bear to go through all that anxiety again...
Anyway, the judges sure are taking their time...
Squeeze
buzz...
If this ever reached Wei's ear,
Considering his pride, he'd probably kill Hao himself.

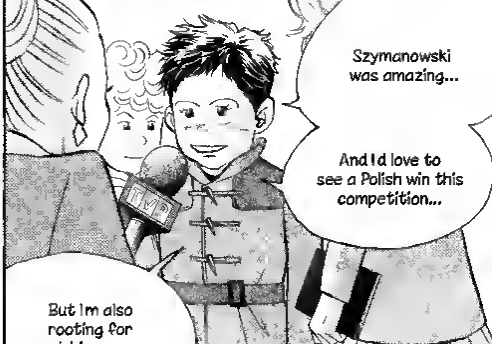

Hmm, let's see...
I suppose this will be a one-on-one showdown between Szymanowski and Wei Pang competing for first place.

Who do you think will win the first place, sensei?
Hmm, most people believe it will be a fight between Szymanowski and Wei Pang.
...
Lech Szymanowski, of course!!!
...Is what I want to say, but we also have to look out for Wei Pang and Aubrey Theiss...

My heart is speeding up just thinking about it. There's no way I can say that out loud.
Ba-dum Ba-dum
But if I were to tell the truth, I'd say... Ichinose poses a huge threat to both of them...


The winner will surely be Japan's Kai Ichinose!
TVP
I wasn't asking for the public's opinion!

Ichinose.
Ichinose.
Right! So this summarizes the atmosphere of the competition venue!


Szymanowski was amazing...
And I'd love to see a Polish win this competition...
But I'm also rooting for Ichinose.

Me too!
All right, all right...
I get it, I get it!
Me three!

The kids are just being truthful...
Aha-ha...
Everyone is going "Ichinose", "Ichinose", it's making me sick.

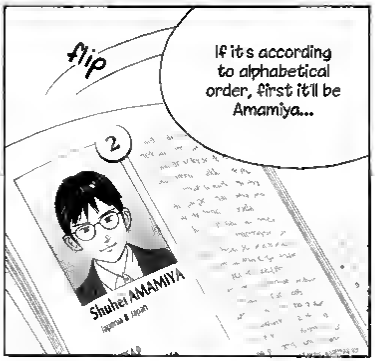
Hahaha...
Being truthful doesn't make it the truth.
There's no need to worry though. Ichinose has no chance of being the winner!
The winner will probably be either Lech Szymanowski or Wei Pang.
Is that so?
It doesn't even matter who the winner is! At this point, my only concern is...
Whether Shuhei will make it to the finals. That's it.
...
When will Father's "anxiety" stop...?
Probably when the results are out...

The names of the finalists will be announced according to alphabetical order
We apologize to have kept everyone waiting
We shall now announce the results of the second round in the fifteenth Chopin Competition.
The list will only be read once, but you will find the results later on the noticeboard near the entrance of the hall.

If it's according to alphabetical order, my name will be the first to be called.
But who cares even if this is the case!
Shuhei might be just on the borderline!
As long as he gets to advance to the finals...
However, I don't think that will happen.
Like what happened with Adamski, there is a possibility that I'll be eliminated.

I managed to discover my own music at the very last minute!!
Because...

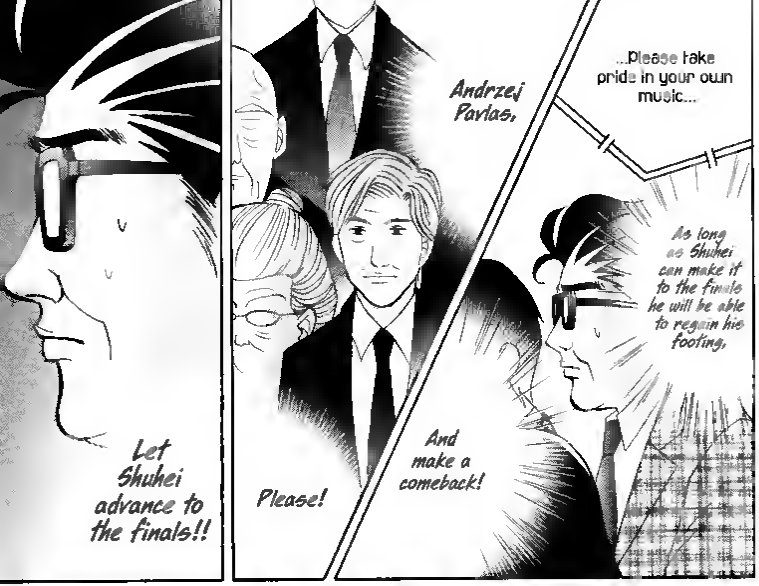
And then it'll be me.
3
Chang Soo AN
Anime Pol. South Korea


flip
If it's according to alphabetical order, first it'll be Amamiya...
2
Shuhei AMAMIYA
Japanese ♦ Japan

flip
And my name will be the third one to be called!
4
Chang Woo AN
Anime Pol. South Korea

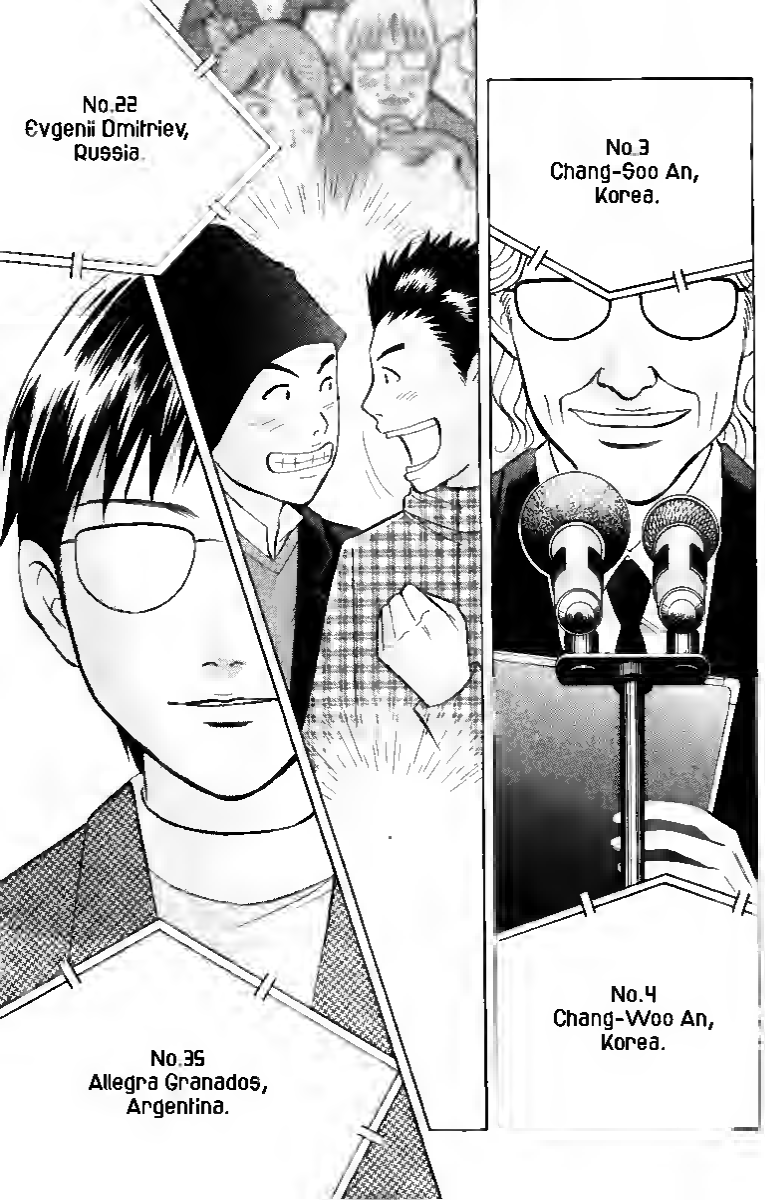
We are pleased to have the chairman of the judging panel, Mr Adam Jasiński, announce the results.

I would like to thank all thirty contestants for your hard work.
Now I shall announce the twelve contestants who will advance to the third and final round


Let Shuhei advance to the finals!!
Please!
Andrzej Pavlas,
And make a comeback!
...please take pride in your own music...
As long as Shuhei can make it to the finale he will be able to regain his footing,

And now, we'll move on to the results!

Father!
Let's celebrate with something delicious after the announcement!
Please! Don't let Shuhei be eliminated!
Please!!! Call Shuhei's name!!!


No.22
Evgenii Dmitriev,
Russia.
No.3
Chang-Soo An,
Korea.
No.4
Chang-Woo An,
Korea.
No.35
Allegra Granados,
Argentina.

No.36
Daniel Hunt,
USA.
No.48
Wei Pang,
China.
No.37
Kai Ichinose,
Japan.
No.54
Lech Szymanowski,
Poland.
No.44
Satoru Mukai,
Japan.
No.62
Aubrey Theiss,
Germany.
No.45
Sophie Ormesson,
France.
No.78
Olesha Yushchenko,
Ukraine.

These are the twelve finalists.
A very big congratulations to those who have passed!
I...

Finalists END

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Artwork from "Bungou Stray Dogs"

Chapter 176

I Want To Be Alone

I only managed to pick up the last 3 names.
Ajino... Grandpa Jean...
Where are you guys?
So am I in or not?
Sousuke!!
Kai has passed the second round! What should I do?

That kid freaking made it into the finals!!
Let's have a toast! A toast!!
What should you do? Be truthful for once and rejoice!
We should hurry up and tell Kai the good news!
He got surrounded by kids near the entrance and couldn't come in...
Yeah, he might not have heard the results.
It's so crowded we can hardly make our way through!
Kai will be devastated no matter how I put it...
S...Still...
The thought of telling Kai that Amamiya has been eliminated fills me with dread...

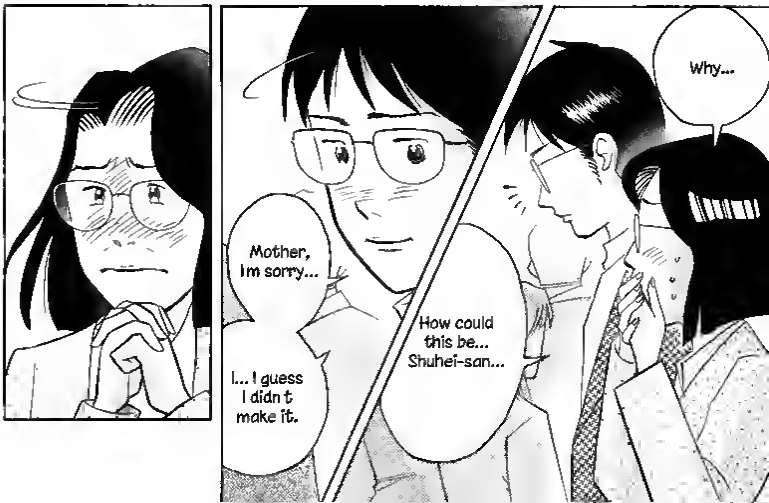
The debate among the judges was very fierce...

I was...
It is regrettable that some contestants failed to make it to the next round by an extremely narrow margin.

My piano playing... The music that only belongs to me...
Eliminated.

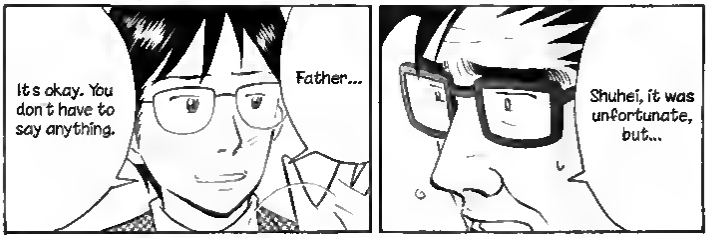
Was eliminated!!

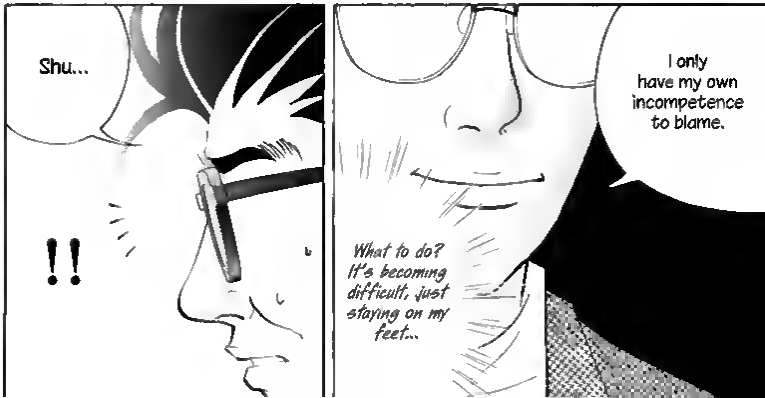
Please tell me it's a lie.
Please...


Why...
Mother, Im sorry...
How could this be... Shuhei-san...
I... I guess I didn't make it.

Eliminated...
Father.
Shuhei was...
I originally planned...
To tease you for being dissatisfied with my performance when I made it to the finals...
Father was right all along.
Eh?
Shuhei...?

It's...
It's hard to make conversation...
Such a shame...
But it seems that I can't do that. Such a shame...

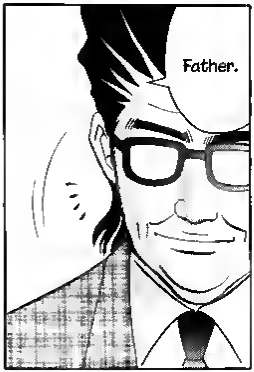

It's okay. You don't have to say anything.
Father...
Shuhei, it was unfortunate, but...

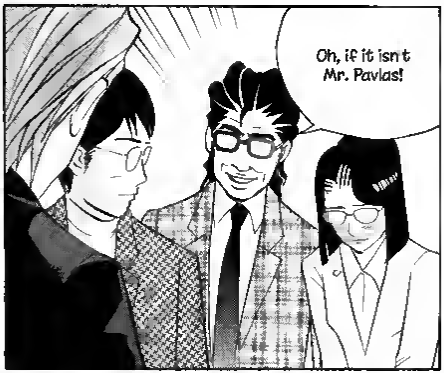

Shu...
!!
What to do? It's becoming difficult, just staying on my feet...
I only have my own incompetence to blame.

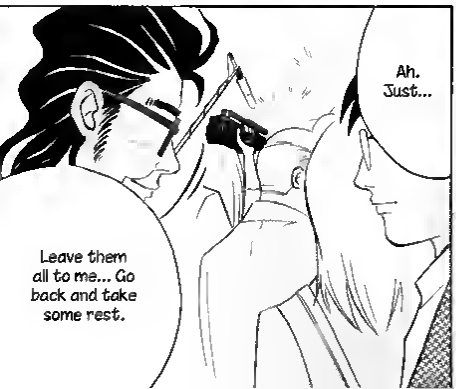
Andrzej Pavlas.
Mr. Pavlas...
Wha...
Why ever did you think I left Shuhei in your care?!
Why was Shuhei eliminated?! Andrzej Pavlas.

Shuhei!
Mr. Pavlas!
I feel sorry too, sir.
I'm so sorry!
I truly am...
But you've taken your first step as a proper pianist.
There's nothing to be ashamed of! It was a brilliant performance!

...Thank you very much.
Ugh... What should I do... Stop talking already! Or I might really just break down...


Father.


Oh, if it isn't Mr. Pavlas!


Ah. Just...
Leave them all to me... Go back and take some rest.

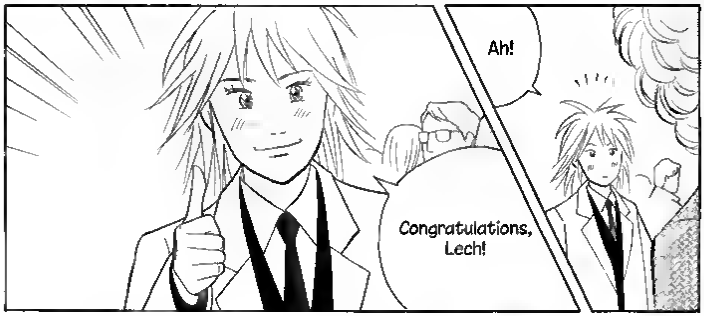
But may I be excused for now?
I know there are interviews to attend,

We should discuss your future some other day, Shuhei!
Sure.
Thank you, sir.
I'm sorry, sir.
Please excuse me.
What...
What's with this guy?!
Is he still trying to butt in and meddle with Shuhei's piano playing?!

I want...
I want to be alone right now!!
I want to get out as fast as I can...
Faster!
I...

Lech!
What's taking you so long?!

ガヤ ガヤ
!
It will be a pain in the ass if we get caught by the press again!


Ah!
Congratulations, Lech!

Whaattttt?!!!
Aren't you gonna congratulate yourself as well?

Really? Did I really pass?!
Yeah... You passed.
I only caught the last 3 names starting from yours!
It's a shame though...
Amamiya.

Lech!
ビクッ
You've got to congratulate him too!
Really? That's great!
I got scolded... It's all Kai's fault...
Amamiya!

I Want To Be Alone END

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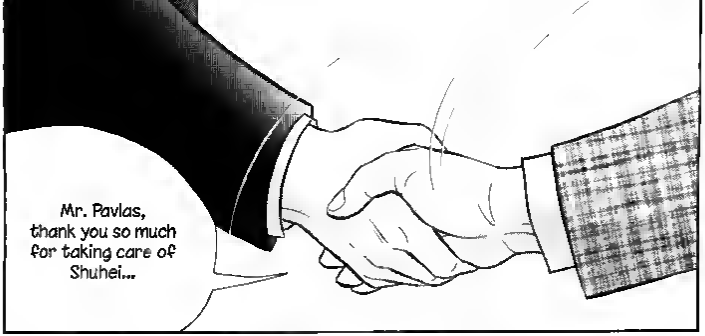
Artwork from "Guarding"

Chapter 177

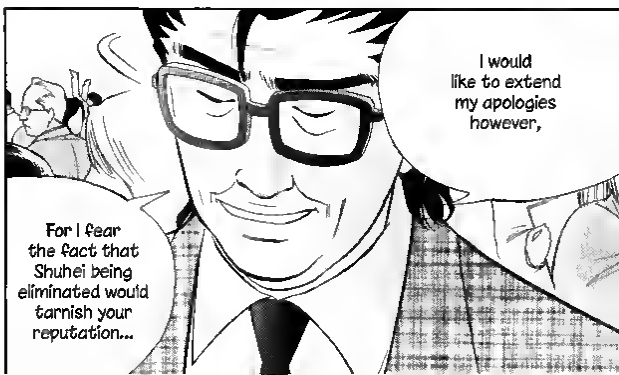
I Won't Say "Congratulations"


Mr. Pavlas, thank you so much for taking care of Shuhei...

A pity? That was his only comment?
There's nothing to be sorry about... There are always losers in competitions.

It is indeed a pity.
I never really know how to deal with the father of Shuhei's...

ガヤ
ガヤ
It's a shame that he couldn't make it to the finals though...

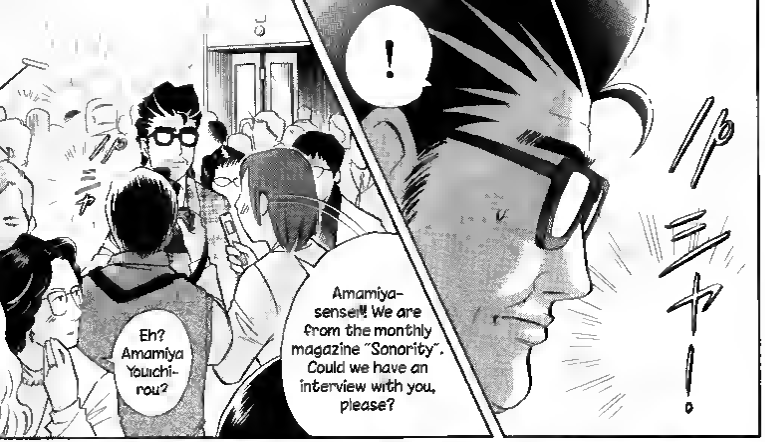

I would like to extend my apologies however,
For I fear the fact that Shuhei being eliminated would tarnish your reputation...

Shuhei will be relieved to hear that compliment from you, sir.
...
What is this father trying to imply...?
That is not true.
Though he is not able to advance to the finals, but thanks to his brilliant performance, my reputation has actually gone up.
What...

Youichi-rou!
Namie-san...
My... Andrzej is here too!

Ah... Kristina! I can't believe something like this would happen to Shuhei...
Kristina!!

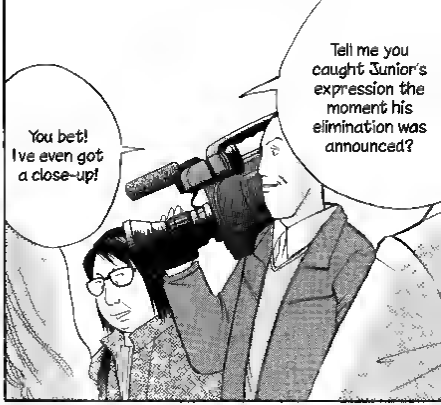
I shall take my leave now...
Let's meet again some other time!
Sure.
I see.. Kristina seems to be a close friend of this family..
I'm saved... Now I can take my leave...
It was such a pity...
Yeah... I still can't bring myself to believe it...
...
He played so well...
Yes, he really did.
See you later, Kristina.
Yeah, see you.
Didn't even bother to explain why Shuhei was eliminated...
Nor did he apologize for his own incompetence...
Trying to escape huh, Pavlas...

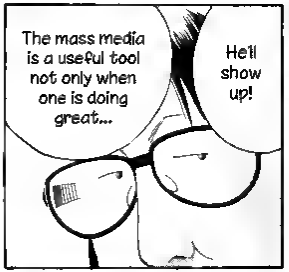

!
パシャ!
Amamiya-sensei!! We are from the monthly magazine "Sonority". Could we have an interview with you, please?
Eh? Amamiya Youichirou?

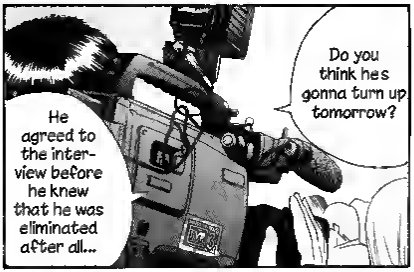
ガヤ
ガヤ

What should we do now?
Amamiya Junior isn't here, shall we just interview Mr. Youichirou instead?
Let's do that.
It's better than nothing...

We are having a photoshoot with him tomorrow at the Łazienki Park anyway...
That's fine then.


Tell me you caught Junior's expression the moment his elimination was announced?
You bet! I've even got a close-up!

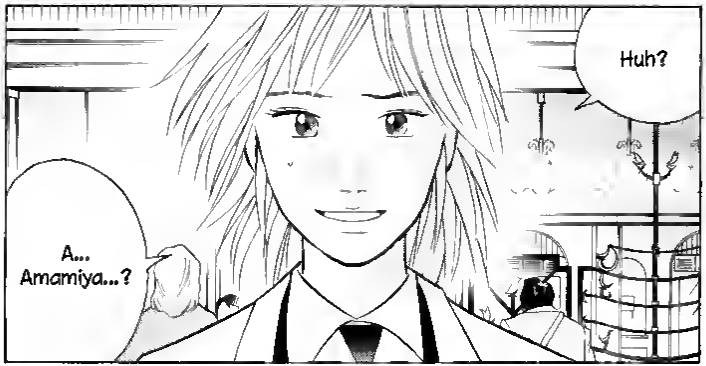

The mass media is a useful tool not only when one is doing great...
He'll show up!


Do you think he's gonna turn up tomorrow?
He agreed to the interview before he knew that he was eliminated after all...

Even in bad times, having exposure through the media is a way of self advertising!
They, for instance, know how to play this game very well.
Now that you mention it, the twins do seem very popular.

Are you...

Are you trying to make me congratulate you?


Huh?
A... Amamiya...?

This...
This is a nightmare...

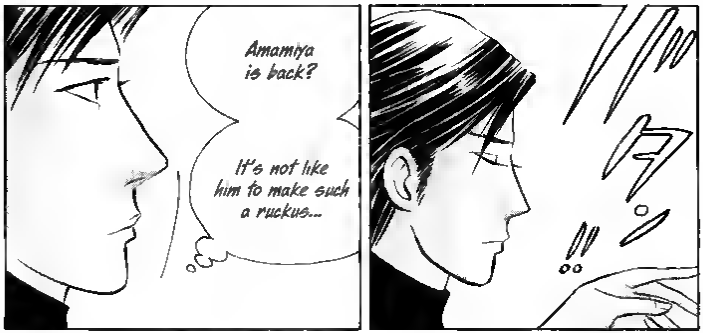
You've got to congratulate him too!
Huh?
Huh?
Kai.
I won't say "congratulations"...
H...How dare you...
Appear before me at the worst possible time...!!

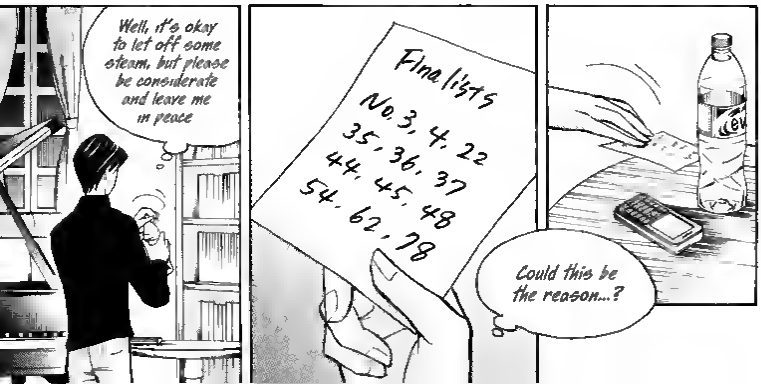
Laugh all you want.
But you know I'm not in the mood for "congratulations" right now, don't you...

Good-bye...

Ah...
No way.
This can't be true!!
A...

Amamiya!!
……


Amamiya is back?
It's not like him to make such a ruckus...
!!


Well, it's okay to let off some steam, but please be considerate and leave me in peace
Final lists
No. 3, 4, 22
35, 36, 37
44, 45, 48
54, 62, 78
Could this be the reason...?

Jeezzzz2~~~

Tamakaji-sensei even twisted his ankle and is now resting right over there!
I've run back and forth between the venue and this place... I even took the cab...
My calls wouldn't get through...

Do you know how hard I've been searching for you?!
Give me a break, Kai!
My ribs are hurting...

I'm sorry, Kousei...
Well...
I bet you were fooling around out of excitement. I'll forgive you this time.
That aside, the pub seems really cheerful and lively today...
Yeah! They are putting on a celebration for me.
There will be a feast. Why don't you join us too, Kousei?
Really? That would be awesome ♡ Can Tamakaši-sensei come along as well?
Of course!
Cool...

T/N: "STO LAT", MEANING "ONE HUNDRED YEARS" IN POLISH, IS A TRADITIONAL POLISH SONG THAT IS SUNG TO EXPRESS GOOD WISHES.

But...
All the while...
and I should feel happy about it...
It was a blessing
I had my mind on something else.
Throughout the night...

Amamiya!!!

The Perfect World of KAI

Music Assistance / Shimoda Koji
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To be continued in Volume 20

"Piano no Mori" Music Terminology Notes

CHAPTER 169

CANTABILE

A particular style of playing designed to imitate the human voice in a smooth singing style. Prevents a piece from becoming dry and sluggish.

NOBLE

With elegance.
In terms of music, it means performing with grace and dignity without giving the performance a coarse or rough impression.

CHAPTER 170

HARMONY

The use of simultaneous pitches (tones, notes), or chords.
Composers are known to utilize the advanced law of harmony to give rise to various musical expressions.

CONTRAPUNCTUS

Most generally involves very different, independent/unique, and harmonious musical lines. If harmony is said to be the vertical (linear) aspect of music, then contrapunctus would be the horizontal feature of it.

下田コラム①

SHIMODA COLUMN 1

The International Chopin Piano Competition

BY SHIMODA KOUJI (MUSIC CRITIC AND PIANIST)

The International Chopin Piano Competition, also known as the Chopin Competition, is the competition where Kai, Amamiya, Szymanowski and Wei Pang go all out competing in each round. Even in the real world, the Chopin Competition is a place where talented young pianists from all around the world gather, and perform pieces by Chopin with an earnest heart.

Founded in 1927, the Chopin Competition is believed to be one of the oldest concours known.

Once every 5 years, the Chopin Competition is held in Chopin's birthplace, Warsaw of Poland. The competition allows only the works of one composer, Chopin, specifically, to be played, making it one of the most unique concours in the world.

The idea for creating the competition came from the pianist and pedagogue Jerzy Zurawlew. When working with young people, he observed their keenness for rivalry and for displaying their talents, so he came to the conclusion that a pianistic tournament would be the best way of encouraging them to play Chopin. Also, the competition was born of the need to perpetuate the piano playing tradition that was characteristic to Chopin's style.

One might wonder why the Chopin Competition is notable for its well-justified world-wide reputation. The first reason is very obvious – It provides a platform for Chopin lovers to compare notes while playing their favorite pieces by Chopin. I belive the second reason is the fact that it is only held once in 5 years, making each competition relatively more long-awaited compared to the Olympics, which is held every 4 years. In addition, due to the age restrictions, one can at most participate in 2 consecutive competitions in their lifetime. Last but not least, the main reason that the Chopin Competition arouses such interest among the public is because prizewinners of the Competition tend to enjoy very promising careers as pianists. Ashkenazy, Pollini and Argerich are all recipients of prizes in the Chopin Competition. Among Japanese prizewinners are Hiroko Nakamura, Mitsuko Uchida, Akiko Ebi, Michie Koyama, Yukio Yokoyama, Takako Takahashi and Rika Miyatani.

Ever since its initiation, the Chopin Competition has been filled with drama. In the 1st Chopin Competition held in 1927, the composer Dmitry Shostakovich took part but was unsuccessful in securing a prize. In the 2nd Chopin Competition in 1932, it was a tie between Alexandre Uninsky and Imre Ungár, who was blind, for the first prize. The winner was decided by coin flipping, in which Uninsky won. Chieko Hara and Miwa Kai participated in the 3rd Chopin Competition in 1937, marking the first entry of Japanese contestants in the Chopin Competition. During the 5th Competition held in 1955, Harasiewicz's winning the first place over Ashkenazy has led to Michelangeli, a juror and well-known pianist, to show his disapproval by resigning from the jury. It was also the first time there was a Japanese prizewinner – Kiyoko Tanaka won the 10th prize. In the 6th Competition in 1960, Arthur Rubinstein, who led the jury, declared Pollini the winner, allegedly saying, "That boy can play the piano better than any of us." In the 9th Chopin Competition in 1975, Tarnawska, who made it into the finals, was subjected to harassment by supporters of another contestant that was eliminated, leading to Tarnawska's scandalous abstention from the competition. In the 10th Competition in 1980, Vietnamese contestant Dang Thai Son became the first Asian contestant who came out on top. Another contestant, Ivo Pogorelić, also received high praises from a large audience. One of the adjudicators, Martha Argerich, proclaimed Pogorelić a "genius" and resigned from the jury in protest of his elimination in the 3rd round. In 1985 when the 11th Chopin Competition was held, the winner of the first place, Stanislav Bunin, had a breakthrough in Japan after being documented on the NHK channel, after which he took the unprecedented step of holding a piano recital in Nippon Budokan. The 12th Chopin Competition was held in 1990, and for the first time in history, no one was awarded the first prize. Despite the lack of a winner, it was a great year for the Japanese where as many as 7 Japanese contestants made it to the semi-finals, and they were addressed by the media as the "Seven Samurais" in the local news.

So what do you readers think? I'm sure everyone knows that there are bound to be events of happiness, sorrow, anger and joy in the shadow of the grand stage during the Chopin Competition in which Kai and Co. take part. But, I believe that by performing with a positive mind, young Chopin lovers will surely carry on their love for Chopin's works until the end of time.

下田コラム②

SHIMODA COLUMN 2

Kai's Performance and His Pieces of Choice

BY SHIMODA KOUJI (MUSIC CRITIC AND PIANIST)

●Chapter 169
Polonaise in A flat Major Op 53 No 6 "Heroic"

Chopin has left us with many great Polonaises among other Polish marches. This particular piece was composed between 1842 and 1843. In fact, the title "Heroic" wasn't given by Chopin himself.

It was composed in a three-part form, where the polonaise is preceded by an introduction, continued by the main theme, and then the middle part (Trio), in which the main theme repeats once more and ends in a coda. This piece features a grand introduction where there are fast ascending chromatic notes of the successive fourths, giving an element of thrill which also helps in setting the mood of the piece. Most pianists would start the piece with a loud bang. However, Kai made it a point to gradually build up the intensity of the piece by directing all his energy inwards, saving them up. As for the central part, despite the first theme employing a gallant rhythm, Kai played it nobly (elegantly) when it first appeared, and portrayed the heroicness of the piece in a bombastic manner as the theme was repeated again. This describes the performance featured in Chapter 169 "To the forest!!!"

This is followed by the middle section where the left hand moves in pounding octaves, which resemble the galloping rhythm of hooves in the march of the Polish knights. On the other hand, the right hand brings out the heroic element of the main theme. The main theme then repeats once more. During the repetition, instead of going back from forte (f) to piano (p), Kai went directly from a forte (f) to a fortissimo (fff). This can only be achieved by pianists who possess a substantial amount of stamina and strength. Then, the main theme is replayed and ends brilliantly with a victorious coda.

●Chapter 170 & 171
Piano Sonata in B Minor Op 58 No 3

Out of the three piano sonatas by Chopin, Sonata No. 3, composed in 1844, is the largest in scale. That year, Chopin's health was not in top condition. After the passing of his father, Nicholas, in spring, Chopin was in a state of devastation both physically and mentally. However, his spirit returned when he was reunited with his sister, Ludwika, after having been separated for 14 years, which resulted in the production of this masterpiece. This sonata consists of four movements, which is indeed a grand and expansive composition.

●Movement I Allegro Maestoso

The firm structure of a sonata is featured. To explain the sonata in simple words, the exposition section is where the two contrasting themes of the movement are stated for the first time, the development section then follows, where the themes are developed in different ways, whereas in the recapitulation section, the exposition is repeated again and the two contrasting themes conjoin. Some pianists tend to overly express themselves by demonstrating various techniques in the exposition of this piano sonata as it is rather long, rendering the piece tedious and lengthy. However, Kai has performed it in a controlled manner, so as to develop the intensity of the piece as the music unfolds. Kai has learnt to direct his erratic bursts of raw energy inward through moving away from the piano and undergoing trainings such as focusing dim sunlight on a point using a magnifying glass, and suppressing the urge to give chase to fish that swim near him. All that has equipped Kai with the technique to express himself by feeling the flow of energy within his body.

●Movement II "Scherzo" Molto Vivace

The word "scherzo" carries the meaning of "I joke" or "I jest" in Italian. This 2nd movement is also known as "trio", and is a three-part musical form consisting of a main theme, middle section and a repetition of the main theme. Kai played the main theme with the lightness of a feather and the middle section with strength and vividness, putting extra emphasis on the contrapunctus, which has successfully prevented his performance from becoming dull and lengthy.

●Movement III Largo

An enharmonic key is used to enable a smooth transition from the 2nd movement. Again, it is a three part musical form. With accompaniment as calm as glass, the melody is played in a cantabile (songlike) manner, which eventually leads to the middle section in which the melody sounds sorrowful and ethereally beautiful. In the subsequent return to the main theme, Kai demonstrated a super super super pianissimo, a sound that can only described as exquisite, reawakening the nostalgia in every single member of the audience, urging them to return to the embrace of Mother nature.

●Movement IV "Finale" Presto non tanto

The Finale is a passionate rondo. In rondo form, a principal theme alternates with one or more contrasting themes, generally called "episodes". This final movement has always been perceived as refreshing and neat from the viewpoint of the audience. However, it is actually very strenuous and exhausting to the pianist's arms. Yet, as mentioned by one of the music critics regarding Kai's performance, "It's different from the accumulated force of an engine". The burning propulsion continues brilliantly till the end, leaving behind a "golden ray", and this concludes Kai's performance.

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